

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD



“Take Roger and Betty with you!” Neddy commanded grandly.

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD



By
STELLA MEAD

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HELEN JACOBS

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TO
THE TWO BEST AUNTIES
AUNT LIZZIE OF STOKE HAMMOND
AND
AUNTIE MARTHA OF PADIHAM
AND TO THE BEST ARTIST
HELEN JACOBS

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The *News-Chronicle*, for "The Cat who was a Carpenter."

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and "Santa Claus."

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is born To-day."

Mr. S. A. Bachell, for the music to "Santa Claus."

Jack Frost and Tweeny Bunting, who made their first appearance in the Star Radio, are duly acknowledged to "The Star."

THE STORY IS ABOUT —

Roger,	aged six and a half, living at 24, Ladbrooke Square, London, W.11.
Betty, W. Forbes Warrington,	his twin sister. a father, belonging to the children. He writes books and "po'tries."
Florence, Carline,	his wife. who has pains in her back and says she is getting old. Her real name is Caroline, but the "o" was dropped out by a little girl of long ago and never picked up again.
Father Christmas. Mother Christmas, Mektoub,	his wife, of course. servant-of-all-work to Mother Christmas.
Neddy Donkey,	who gives Father Christmas some advice.
Jack Frost, Tweeny Bunting,	poet and window-pane artist. who mixes Jack's paints and cleans his brushes.
The King of the Moon.	He lives in Come-when-you-like Castle, on the Moon. The one important thing about him is his DIET SHEET.

THE STORY IS ABOUT—

Jip Joppa.

The Ice King.

The Ice Queen.

Whipper Whopper,

who makes ice and hoar-frost for their Majesties the Ice King and the Ice Queen. He is the only man in the book whom nobody loves. We blush for him, and refuse to mention his wicked deeds till we come to them in the book.

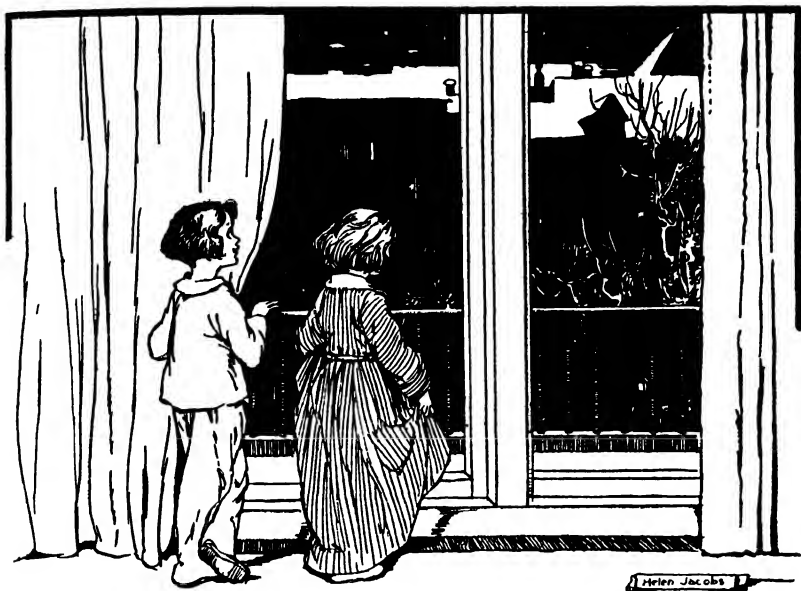
The Reindeer,

The Ice Maidens,

The Dolls.

who are always in a hurry.

who certainly can dance.



Chapter One

WAITING FOR HIM

ROGER and Betty were looking out of the balcony window from their bedroom high up in a London house, 24, Ladbroke Square, W.11. Down in the street below, Christmas carollers were singing, "Hark! the herald-angels sing."

The children were both in their pyjamas, just ready to jump into bed. But they stopped by the window to join in the singing. Betty sang like a

little bird warbling. As she stood there, holding up her long blue dressing-gown at each side, she looked like a blue bird just ready to fly away.

Roger finished the first verse, and then darted across the room to the fireplace. He flung himself down on the woolly hearthrug and called up the chimney, "Father Christmas! Father Christmas, can you hear me? We want you to be quick and come."

Betty went to her bed and patted the long grey stocking hanging from the rail. "I'm glad Carline lent us her stockings," she said. "They will hold such a lot of toys. I believe mine's a little bit longer than yours."

Roger's messages to Father Christmas suddenly came to an end. He went hurriedly to his bed, took down his long grey stocking, which was really Carline's, and carefully measured it against Betty's. "Of course they're just the same," he said, "only you've stretched yours a little bit."

Betty switched on the electric light by her bedside. Carline had put on a new orange silk shade and now, with the other light turned off, a rosy glow was spread over the whole room. It fell on

the white walls with their gay nursery frieze, on the blue carpet, on the thick blue curtains that hung over the door and at the balcony windows, and on the gay silk patchwork quilt which covered Roger's bed.

That quilt deserved to be specially lit up, for it was a Quilt of the Greatest Importance in the family. "The Rainbow Quilt," the children called it, and Carline never forgot to let them have it on their little beds in turn, a week each. This was Roger's week.

Bells from the great church across the square began to chime a merry Christmas peal. Betty ran back to the window. "Listen to the bells!" she cried.

"Look at the stars!" said Roger, at her side.

"I am so glad there are lots of stars out to-night," Betty said softly. "Father Christmas must like to see a pretty sky when he comes to fill our stockings."

"There are always lots of stars on Christmas Eve," declared Roger.

"Who told you so?"

"No one. I just know. There were lots of stars last year, and the year before, and years and

years before that. . . .” He paused, remembering that he was, after all, only six years old.

“I’m sure you can’t remember stars for all those years, Roger,” protested Betty. “I can’t, and I was born when you were. You are ecksaggerating, like Mummy says you do.”

“Wouldn’t it be fun if we could stay up and see Father Christmas?” Roger said, changing the subject. “I know a boy who stayed awake all night long one Christmas Eve, and he saw Father Christmas come into his bedroom all in red, with his white beard and long gown, and a great sack filled with toys.”

“Oo, how lovely!” Betty clapped her hands in delight. “It would be wonderful if we could see him come into our room to-night. Shall we stay awake and wait for him?”

“Um, I don’t know if we could. We should have to keep awake for millions of seconds. He never comes till the middle of the night, and a night is ever so much longer than a day.”

“Is it? Why? Don’t the clocks tick so fast during the night? Do their tickers go to sleep?”

“I don’t know about that,” Roger said, “but one night when I had toothache and went in

WAITING FOR HIM

Mummy's bed I didn't sleep at all, and the night was longer than three days."

"Roger! Betty!" called Mummy from the door, "what are you doing there by the window? You will catch cold. Jump into your beds at once!"

Roger gave a rabbit's leap, and was under the Rainbow Quilt in the twinkling of an eye. Betty, half-way across the blue carpet, paused, and said in a soft little voice of wonder, "Oh, Mummy, how lovely you look! Is that your new dress?"

"Yes," said Mummy. "Daddy and I are going to a Christmas Eve party to-night."

Mummy sat down on the chair beside Betty's bed, and the rosy glow from the lamp fell on her wavy brown hair, her smiling, girl-like face; it fell on the silken folds of her new evening-dress, and made her look very young and pretty.

"Where is Daddy?" demanded Roger. "I wish he would hurry up and come. Perhaps he will tell us a bedside story."

"No," said Mummy firmly. "Daddy won't tell you tales just before you go to sleep. You become too excited."



Mummy sat down on the chair beside Betty's bed.

“ And there’s some tales I don’t hold with during the day, neither,” cried a sharp voice.

Carline was speaking. She had just come into the room and was gathering up a pile of clothes to be mended. “ There was that story yesterday,” she went on, “ about an ogre, a dreadful monster with four heads. I don’t want any ogres in my nursery, frightening the children and making them dream queer dreams.”

“ Oh, Carline ! ” cried Betty, “ Daddy’s tales never frighten us. We know there isn’t really and truly any ogre at all, but we like to pretend there is one, and to feel all shivery while Daddy is telling about him.”

“ Besides, Carline,” chimed in Roger, “ you know you sat and listened all the time, and you were dreffully disappointed because Daddy hadn’t time to finish the story.”



"It was just because of that way Master has of telling a story," Carline said, smiling at Mummy.

"You can't help listening, and it seems to go through you. It made me forget all about my pains."

Betty looked up and asked softly, "Are your rheumatisms bad to-night, Carline?"

"Dear me, no!" cried Carline, straightening her back. "I only get them in the nasty, foggy weather."

As she spoke, Carline tossed back her head and looked ready to fight against all the pains in the world. She was a slight little woman, with a small, thin face that was sharp-pointed and covered with wrinkles. Her snow-white hair was drawn tightly back from her forehead. Her blue eyes were severe, and perhaps only Mummy knew about the great love which had flamed in her small body through many a crisis in the family history.

Mummy said now, gently, "Daddy has asked Father Christmas to buy a cottage for Carline, near her sister, by the sea. If her pains become worse, she will go there to live, and we shall all be able to go and see her and have a picnic by the sea. Won't that be lovely?"

Betty blew a kiss to Carline and said gaily, "It's lovelier having Carline here with us."

WAITING FOR HIM

No one could have called Carline's eyes severe at that moment ; Betty had said the words for which all the Carlines of the world serve and yearn.

But Carline merely picked up a pair of Roger's knickers and exclaimed, " I am sure Roger needs someone here to mend his clothes," and with a shake of her head she went away.

" Mummy," Roger asked suddenly, " when you were a little girl and Carline looked after you, were you naughty sometimes, and was she cross with you ? "

" Of course," said Mummy. " But she was always kind and good. I had no mother when I was a little girl and Carline did everything for me."

" Poor Mummy," said Betty, " I do think it was dreadful for you, being born without a mother."

" Carline never had any pains in those days," went on Mummy, " and she used to run about in the garden with me and play wonderful games."

" And she helped you to make this quilt, didn't she ? " broke in Roger, patting the quilt on his bed. " Do tell us about how you and Carline made the Rainbow Quilt."

" Once," began Mummy, repeating an oft-told tale, " I was ill in bed, and could not walk for

many months. The doctor was àfraid I might never walk again. Carline sent away to a shop for a parcel of lovely pieces of silk, of all beautiful colours. Every morning I used to cut out squares of silk. One morning I would cut orange squares, another morning rose or blue, and perhaps the next morning purple or crimson. I chose the way I wanted the squares put together and Carline stitched them for me on her machine. She used to say that, as soon as the quilt was finished, I should get out of bed and walk, and I always believed her."

"And it all came true, didn't it, Mummy?" cried Betty, in triumph.

"Yes, the very day the Rainbow Quilt, as I called it, was finished, I walked round my room on the doctor's arm. That is why I loved the Rainbow Quilt."

"I wish Daddy would hurry up and come," complained Roger. "He promised to come for a special reason. We've got Christmas Eve secrets . . ."

"Sh!" warned Betty, putting a finger on her lips.

At that very moment there was a sound of somebody springing up the stairs, humming "Good King Wenceslas" on the way. The door was

pushed wider open, and in walked Daddy, a very tall man with a clean-shaven face, and a good deal of dark thick hair. Anyone, looking at him, would see in a moment where Roger's bright, mischievous eyes had come from.

Daddy's head brushed against a streamer hanging from the door.

"How Christmassy we are!" he said. "If I'm not careful I shall get hung up in the festoons. Carline forgets that one of the family is over six feet."

"Had you forgotten the secrets, Daddy?" demanded Roger.

"H'm," said Daddy, "let me see, we have so many secrets. Do you mean the one about . . ."

"We mean my surprise song, and Roger's riddle," said Betty quickly.

"Ah, yes. Of course. Begin, Betty."

"I must tell you, Mummy," said Betty gravely, "that I asked Daddy to write a special Christmas song and teach it to me so I could sing it to you to-night. Now I'll sing it to you."

Betty sat straight up on her bed, her fair curls clustering round her shining face. In her clear voice she trebled sweetly :

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

Christ the Child is born to-day,
Gently nestling on the hay,
Ox and ass in mild surprise
Gaze on Him with friendly eyes.
Little children, leave your play,
Turn to Bethlehem to-day;
Gather round the stall and sing
Sweetest praise to Christ the King.

Wise Men journeyed from afar,
Guided by the heav'nly star.
Shepherds heard the angels sing,
Wandered forth to seek the King.
Little children, leave your play,
Turn to Bethlehem to-day;
Christ, who is the children's friend,
He is there at journey's end.

"Thank you, Betty, I like it very much," said Mummy.. "And you keep in tune quite well."

"Mine is a riddle, to say, not to sing, because I can't keep in tune very well," explained Roger.

"You have to guess it, in only one guess."

"That isn't fair, Roger," objected Betty.

"You should let Mummy have three guesses."

"It is too easy," said Roger firmly. "As soon as I say about the hat . . ."

"Now you are telling!" cried Betty.

WAITING FOR HIM

“I’m not,” Roger replied in a hurt voice.
“I haven’t told a word.”

“I’m waiting to hear the riddle,” said Mummy.
Roger brushed back his hair with his left hand,
as Daddy often did when about to tell a story,
and began to recite very quickly :

I know a lady tall and fair,
With shining gold upon her hair.
Her eyes are like brown pansy flowers
That catch the light of sunny hours.

To-night she wears a lovely gown,
For Santa Claus will come to town ;
And if he meets her on the way,
He’ll smile to see her dressed so gay.

She sometimes wears a velvet hat
(I’m sure you’ll guess her name by that),
It’s trimmed all round with brownish fur
And makes a picture sweet of her.

“Ah, now I must think hard,” said Mummy.
“Let me see . . . a velvet hat . . . trimmed with
brownish fur . . .”

“I said it was too easy !” declared Roger.

“Yes,” went on Mummy slowly, “Auntie
Marguerite had a hat trimmed with fur last winter ;
so it might be Auntie Marguerite.”

“Wrong, wrong! You are quite wrong!” Betty gurgled. “Try again.”

“A velvet hat . . . this is really difficult,” said Mummy. “You are sure it wasn’t a *felt* hat?”

“Quite sure,” Roger said firmly.

“A velvet hat—ah, of course! I have a velvet hat trimmed with fur. Can it be me?”

“It *is* you!” cried Roger. “You were a long time guessing.”

“Fancy thinking it might be Aunt Marguerite!” laughed Betty.

“But you know, Daddy,” Roger said, turning to his father, “there is something in the riddle which I think is quite wrong. If Santa Claus does happen to meet Mummy on the way she will be in the car, and she will have her coat over her pretty new dress, so how can he see it?”

“You’ve stumped me there, Roger,” said Daddy. “Oh, dear, these family critics!”

“What is a family cricket, Daddy?” asked Betty.

“*Critic*, I said, Betty. A critic is someone who keeps us from becoming swollen-headed, isn’t he, Mummy?”

“Oh,” cried Betty, “does your head swell

every time you write a po'try? Then you must come to me and I'll put a piece of butter on. That's what Carline did to me when I fell down and had a lump on my forehead."

But Daddy only laughed, and said he must hurry away and order the car. He kissed Roger and Betty good night, and went down the stairs two steps at a time.

"I must go, too," said Mummy.

"Hear me say my prayers, first," said Betty, and jumping down to the carpet she knelt by her bed and said her evening prayer.

She opened her eyes after the "Amen," looked up at Mummy anxiously and said, "If I think of something extra I want to add on ought I to say P.S.?"

"No, I don't think it is necessary," replied Mummy.

"But I think it would be more proper if I said it," Betty said, and folding her hands again she said in a reverent little voice, "P.S. Please make Carline's rheumatisms better, and, in case Father Christmas forgets, remind him about bringing me a doll to-night. Amen."

Mummy said good-night and turned to go.

Betty called out to her at the door, "Mummy, do you think anyone ever saw Father Christmas when he came to fill the stockings?"

"No one that I know ever did," answered Mummy. "But you must go to sleep now. When you wake up in the morning you can come into our room and show Daddy and me what Father Christmas has put in your stockings."

"And after that Daddy will tell us a little fairy-tale," suggested Betty.

"Not a fairy-tale! I don't want to hear about fairies," Roger chimed in. "I like tales about animals, and adventures, and aeroplanes, and boys sailing away in big ships."

"But I like fairies," persisted Betty. "So do you, don't you, Mummy?"

"Yes," said Mummy, smiling.

"I'm so glad. If you like fairies, you know, you can't really lose things, because they always help you to find them again," and with these words Betty snuggled down on her pillow and waved a farewell kiss to Mummy at the door.

For a few minutes there was silence in the children's room. The great moon, climbing high in the sky, shone over Betty's bed, and sent

streams of yellow light to play on the Rainbow Quilt.

Betty sat up, pushing back her curls. "I can't go to sleep, Roger," she said. "Listen! I can hear some more people in the street singing, 'Hark! the herald-angels sing.' Can't you?"

Roger sat up, and listened with rapt attention. "Yes, I can hear them," he said. "I don't want to go to sleep. I should like to stay awake and wait till Father Christmas comes."

"So should I," Betty said. She leaned over to the little table at the side of her bed and switched on the light again. "There! Now we'll be able to see him. As soon as ever he comes into the room I shall jump out of bed and ask him to let me fill my own stocking. Won't that be fun?"

"I don't think he'll allow you to do that. But we'll sit up in bed and wait for him. Push your pillow up, like mine. I think we'll play a shopping game with the Rainbow Quilt, then we shall find it's easy to keep awake. I am the shopkeeper and you are a lady come to choose your new dresses. The patches are my new spring patterns, you know."

Betty entered into the fun of this. She leaned towards Roger's bed and looked at the end of quilt, which he spread out for her to examine.

"The yellow silk looks very pretty," she said, "but will it wash well?"

"Yes, Mrs. Puddifoot, it will wash splendidly and it won't fade in the sun."

"What a funny name you called me!" gurgled Betty.

"If you are a lady, and I am a shopkeeper, I can't call you Betty," Roger replied severely.

"The pale-blue silk is quite charming," said Betty, holding her head a little on one side and speaking as Mummy sometimes did. "I like it very much, but I'm afraid it won't wear very well."

"I'm sure it will, Mrs. Puddifoot. I sold a hundred thousand yards of it to the Queen of China last week, and now the Queen of Africa has ordered a million yards."

"A million yards! Dear me! Why does the Queen of Africa want to buy such a lot of yards?"

"She is going to make new dresses for all the little princesses; and princesses have trains, you

know, yards and yards long, with little page-boys to walk behind and hold them up."

"When are you going to have a sale?" demanded Betty. "I shan't buy any dresses till you have a sale."

"My sale is on now," Roger replied promptly. "Everything is half-price."

Betty was rubbing her eyes, and she said plaintively, "I'm a little bit cold, Roger. I think I shall snuggle down in my bed for a few minutes till I get warm, but I shan't go to sleep, of course."

"All right," responded Roger. "I'll have a little rest too. I'm not tired really, but my eyes keep wanting to fall shut. I'm not going to sleep, because I want to see Father Christmas when he comes."

Ten minutes later Roger and Betty were both fast asleep.



Chapter Two

HE COMES

ROGER and Betty slept on in their small white beds. At midnight, the great church clock across Ladbroke Square began to chime, one—two—three — four — five — six — seven — eight — nine — ten — eleven — twelve.

At the stroke of twelve the church bells set up a merry peal. Roger stirred uneasily, but he did not wake up—not yet !

The sound of the church bells died away. Again there was silence, and the moonlight streaming into the room where Roger and Betty slept

showed two quiet little figures with heads buried in soft white pillows.

Suddenly, far away in the distance, there was a faint sound of jingling sleigh-bells. The jingle came nearer and grew louder, and louder and louder. . . .

Roger sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes. He could hear the merry ting-a-ling of the bells coming nearer and nearer.

"Betty, Betty!" he cried. "Wake up! I believe he's coming."

Betty jumped up with a start. "Who? Where?" she said, only half-awake.

"Father Christmas. Can't you hear his sleigh-bells jingling?"

"I can," Betty answered in a thrilled voice. "He must be quite near."

She sprang out of bed and peeped through the balcony window.

"He's down in the street below!" she cried. "I'm sure he's coming to fill our stockings."

"If he sees us he won't come in," warned Roger.

Betty looked around. "We must hide quickly," she said. "Come along. We'll get behind the blue curtain over the door."

They glided across the carpet, and slipped behind the thick curtain. They were only just in time. The next minute the long french window at the balcony was flung open and Father Christmas strode into the room.

Roger and Betty, peeping through a tiny, tiny rent in the curtain, saw at once that it really was Father Christmas. He was dressed in a long red robe, edged with white fur. His rosy cheeks were round and jolly, and his beard was so long, so long, that it reached to the broad red sash at his waist. Over his shoulder he carried a huge brown sack, which he flung down on the floor and began to open.

But suddenly he looked round. His blue eyes grew round and big with wonder. "Two empty beds!" he cried. "A light burning! This is very strange. Have I come to the wrong house?"

He fumbled in his deep pocket and pulled out a little notebook. He turned over its pages and read aloud, "W—that's for Warrington. Two children, twins, aged six-and-a-half. Roger and Betty. No. 24, Ladbroke Square, London, W.11. Yes, this is the house marked on my map.

But where are the children? I can't understand what has happened."

Father Christmas stooped down and looked under the beds. He even went to the big cupboard where their clothes were hung, and peeped into that. But he found no sign of the children.

"Perhaps they have gone to sleep in their mother's room," he said aloud. "Well, well, I suppose I had better fill their stockings."

The old man opened wide his sack and pulled out a handful of fruit and a great many small parcels. "Nuts and an apple and orange in the foot," he said, taking down one of the long grey stockings, "that's how I always like to begin."

For a few minutes Father Christmas was very busy, putting all kinds of knobbly shaped parcels and packets in the two stockings. He took a beautiful, fair-haired doll from his sack and said, "I'm afraid this doll is too large to fit into Betty's stocking. I shall put it on the chair by her bed; Roger's drum can go on the table."

He moved quietly about the room, arranging the toys. He hung the filled stockings on the bed-rails again, and then stood back, looking to see that

everything was in order. "There ! I've finished my work in good time this year," he said. "Roger and Betty are the last children on my list. Now I will make for home."

He turned back to the window, and a little blue-clad figure rushed from behind the door. Two small hands clutched at his red gown and Betty's happy, excited voice cried, "Father Christmas ! We are so glad you've come. We waited and waited to see you, and now you really are here."

"Bless me ! What does this mean?" said Father Christmas, looking down at Betty in amazement.

"Wait for me, I'm all twisted up in the curtain," called Roger's voice. Poor Roger came out red and breathless, and panted to Father Christmas, "We are very glad you came. We've been waiting all night for you."

"And now I must go away again," Father Christmas replied.

"Where are you going to ?" asked Betty.

"Back to my own home, in Christmas Land. I must be off."

"Take us with you," Betty said impulsively.

"Oh no, I can't do that," the old man said, edging away.

“Why not?” urged Betty. “We should love to see what Christmas Land is like. We won’t keep you waiting. We’ll come at once.”

“No, no, NO!” said Father Christmas.

“Please, please, PLEASE!” said Betty, smiling up at him and flinging out her arms wide.

Father Christmas looked at her flushed, eager face and said gently, “My dear, I really mustn’t take you. I really couldn’t think of doing so, unless someone advised me to take you.”

“Ask your reindeer if we may go,” urged Betty. “They will advise you.”

Father Christmas was stroking his beard. All at once his eyes brightened. “I might ask Neddy Donkey, who lives in the stable down below,” he said slowly. “He is a friendly creature, and always ready to give advice.”

“Yes, yes, ask Neddy Donkey,” said Betty. “We know him very well. We’ll do just as he says.”

“But Neddy Donkey can’t talk,” objected Roger, “so how can he give Father Christmas any advice?”

“Neddy can talk to-night,” said Father Christmas mysteriously. “Don’t you know that all

animals can talk on Christmas Eve, after I have been to the earth ? ”

“ I know. Daddy once told me that in a story,” said Betty. “ But please, Father Christmas, call Neddy Donkey.”

Father Christmas went to the balcony. He leaned over, and called to the reindeer down in the street below, “ Just tell Neddy Donkey I want to speak to him for a few minutes. Tell him to climb in the sleigh and then he will easily jump to the balcony.”

The children waited, and in a very few minutes Neddy Donkey sprang on to the balcony and trotted through the french window into the bedroom.

Neddy went down on his knees and bowed his head solemnly. “ A merry Christmas to you, Betty ! Merry Christmas, Roger,” he said.

“ I have sent for you, Neddy,” began Father Christmas, “ because I want to ask your advice.”

Neddy nodded gravely, as much as to say, “ I will do my best to help you.”

“ These children,” went on Father Christmas, “ want to come home with me to Christmas Land. Do you think I ought to take them ? ”

“Take Betty, by all means,” Neddy replied promptly, “but not Roger.”

“Why not me?” asked Roger hotly.

“A few days ago,” Neddy Donkey said very slowly, “I was standing outside the grocer’s shop, harnessed to my master’s little wooden cart. Betty gave me a lump of sugar, but *you*—” here Neddy shook his head severely and stamped one hoof angrily on the carpet—“*you* held out to me a sweet, delicious carrot, and just as I was about to eat it you snatched it away.”

“I must explain to you about that carrot,” Roger said in an imploring voice. “I took it out of the kitchen when cook wasn’t there, so it was really rather naughty of me. Just when I was going to give it to you Carline looked at me, and I . . .”

“I understand,” Neddy Donkey said sternly. “You stole that carrot, and when Carline came you tried to hide it.”

Poor Roger blushed, and hung his head.

“Please, Neddy Donkey,” Betty said, going up to the cross-looking donkey and gently stroking its nose, “tell Father Christmas to take us both. Roger loves you just as much as I do, and he often gives me his lump of sugar to bring to you.”

“ But don’t you want to stay here and open your stockings ? ” Neddy asked.

“ We would rather go and see what Christmas Land is like,” Betty said.

The reindeer downbelow were growing impatient. “ Father Christmas,” one of them shouted, “ aren’t you coming soon ? We really must be off.”

“ Yes,” cried the second reindeer, “ do hurry up, please.”

“ I must go,” said Father Christmas, “ the reindeer are calling. Can’t you hear them ? ”

Neddy Donkey clapped his front hoofs together. “ Take Roger and Betty with you ! ” he commanded grandly.

“ I felt sure we should go,” cried Betty in triumph. “ Roger, wrap the Rainbow Quilt round you ! I have my thick dressing-gown on. We must be quick.”

Roger dragged the Rainbow Quilt from his bed and flung it hastily round his shoulders ; for the reindeer were stamping their hoofs on the pavement and calling again and again that Father Christmas must be quick and hurry up and come along ! It was really very worrying for poor Father Christmas.

“ There are plenty of fur rugs in the sleigh ; you won’t be cold,” Neddy Donkey said.

Roger and Betty went to the balcony. Father Christmas sprang down into the sleigh and then, holding out both arms, he called to the children to jump, in turn. Roger jumped first, and Betty followed. Neddy Donkey leaned over the balcony and watched Father Christmas tucking them both up in the warm rugs at the back.

“ Please wait there and see us off, Neddy,” called Betty. “ We will wave our handkerchiefs and say good-bye. People always do that when they go away.”

“ I haven’t got a handkerchief to wave back,” said Neddy Donkey.

“ You can take the little white cloth from my table,” said Betty.

Neddy found the cloth and held it between his teeth, all ready to wave.

“ Hold tight,” cried the first reindeer. “ Off we go ! ”

“ Good-bye, Neddy Donkey,” called Roger, full of glee.

“ Good-bye, Neddy,” said Betty. “ You can look in my stocking and take anything you

fancy. Perhaps you will find some 'nice sweets there.'"

Neddy Donkey shook his head solemnly to and fro, and the white cloth went on fluttering from the balcony till the children had passed far, far, out of sight. Then Neddy walked gravely back to Betty's bed and took the long grey stocking from the rail.

He trotted to the middle of the room and with his teeth he pulled out, one after another, small parcels and packets from the stocking, opening them to see what was inside.

First he took out a small china doll. "What can this be?" he said. "A doll? What a funny little toy for a sensible child like Betty. It can't walk, it can't talk, and it can't even bray."

Next he unwrapped a brown-paper packet and spread out a red silk scarf. "That is rather pretty," he said. "I think it ought to suit me very well." He tied it round his hairy neck, and then ambled across the room to gaze at himself in the mirror on the wall. "It looks very nice," he said.

Neddy went back to the stocking and pulled out

a red paper cap. He fixed this over his ears and went back to the mirror to admire himself again. "Really, I look quite handsome in this scarf and cap," he said. "My wife won't know me when I go home. All the same, I should like to find something good to eat. I haven't come across any of those sweets Betty mentioned. I'll go and have another hunt in the stocking."

This time Neddy knelt down on the carpet, and taking the toe of the stocking between his teeth he gave it a fierce shake, so that all the contents tumbled over the ground. Among them gleamed a lovely rosy carrot!



It was really only a piece of soap painted to look like a carrot, but poor Neddy didn't know that. He thought he was going to eat a nice, juicy carrot for his breakfast, and, full of joy, he placed it on the carpet in front of him. "This is really something worth having," he said. "Sensible man, Father Christmas. I am sure he meant Betty to bring this

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to me for my Christmas breakfast ; that's why he put it in her stocking."

In his delight Neddy capered round and round the carrot, clapping his hoofs together and singing at the top of his gruff, unmusical voice :

I'm proud of myself in this nice silk wrap,
It goes very well with my scarlet cap.

No one can scold me,
For Betty told me
To take what I like ; I'm an honest chap.
Hee-haw, hee-haw,
Hee-hee-haw !

A cap and a wrap they are grand to wear,
And I look very fine in the glass over there.
But I declare it,
And I will swear it,
This carrot's the gift that I find most fair.
Hee-haw, hee-haw,
Hee-hee-haw !

Having finished his song, Neddy went back to his carrot. He bent his head lower and lower, till at last his mouth touched it. He seized it between his teeth, gave a bite and then—he rushed to the balcony window and let that beautiful rosy carrot fall on to the pavement below.

" Soap ! " he cried, in a tone of deep disgust.
" Soap ! of all the low, mean, stupid tricks . . . "



Chapter Three

ROGER AND BETTY MEET MOTHER CHRISTMAS

MOTHER CHRISTMAS swayed gently to and fro in her wooden rocking-chair. She sat in the dining-room of the large house in Christmas Land, where she lived with her husband. The room was a pleasant one, with sunny cream walls and a red carpet. Through the wide window fields of snow shone white in the moonlight.

Between her fingers Mother Christmas held a scrap of blue silk. A bright needle flew in and out a tiny seam. From that tiny scrap of silk she was making a tiny silk gown for a tiny flaxen-haired doll.

Mother Christmas stitched away, a smile on her lips. She was a happy-looking old lady, with fluffy white hair and shining blue eyes. Her cheeks were like two summer apples, which had lain for a long time in the sun, and become wrinkled and rosy. She wore a mauve silk dress with a full, flowing skirt, and in her face there was such love and brightness that a child, coming into the room, would at once find its way to her knees.

Close to the window stood a white Polar Bear. The Polar Bear was staring out at those fields of snow ; but every now and again he turned to peer anxiously at Mother Christmas. He looked as if he wanted to say something, but was afraid to speak.

Mother Christmas glanced uneasily at the clock. She rose from her seat and joined the Polar Bear at the window. " Father Christmas is very late to-night, Mektoub," she said. " I hope nothing has happened to him ! "

Mektoub shook his furry white head knowingly

and replied, "Do you ever expect Father Christmas back at the right time?"

"Well, no," said Mother Christmas, laughing, "I can't say that I do. Last year, I remember, when he was on his way home after filling the children's stockings, he called at Jack Frost's house, and stayed there gossiping for about three hours. The year before that he dropped a heap of his toys in a meadow, and wasted a good deal of time searching for them in the dark!"

She opened the window, and stood there listening. "The sleigh-bells!" she cried, at last. "I can hear them. Father Christmas won't be long now."

Mektoub began to move swiftly about the room. He spread a snowy cloth over the table, set out plates and dishes, laid the knives and forks, and then went out into the kitchen to prepare the meal.

In a few minutes the courtyard rang with the merry jingle of the bells. Mother Christmas smiled happily, then a puzzled look came into her eyes. Surely she could hear the chatter of strange voices? She moved to the dining-room door and flung it wide open.

"Here we are, my dear!" cried Father Christmas, and, with a merry laugh, he strode into the

middle of the room and set Roger and Betty down on the crimson carpet.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mother Christmas, because she could think of nothing else to say.

"Two Christmas presents for you, my dear," laughed Father Christmas, "one for each stocking."

"Who are they? Where have they come from?" Mother Christmas asked, wondering if she were dreaming.

"Ask them," was her husband's reply.

Betty stepped forward, her bright curls shining, her long blue dressing-gown falling around her. "We are Betty and Roger Warrington," she said happily. "We have come from London, from 24, Ladbroke Square."

"The house is really not very far from the Zoo," put in Roger.

"There is a parrot in the basement——" began Betty.

"That can say my name," finished Roger.

Mother Christmas went quietly into the kitchen and asked Mektoub to prepare two basins of hot bread-and-milk; she then went back to the dining-room and seated the children one on each side of her

on the sofa. "Now, tell me please why you have come here," she said.

"We thought it would be fun to come to Christmas Land," smiled Betty ; "but we didn't know you were here. We didn't even know there was a Mother Christmas. No one has ever told us about you. Have you any children ?"

"All the children in the world are ours," broke in Father Christmas proudly. "We let them grow up in the homes on the earth, and every year my wife sends presents to them. I take them in my sack on Christmas Eve."

"So that is why we call you Father Christmas," said Roger, gazing wisely into the old man's face.

Mektoub came in, carrying a large tray. He walked very cleverly on his hind legs, and he wore a blue apron tied round the middle of his body. He set two blue bowls and two silver spoons on the table, glancing at Betty and Roger in a very nervous fashion. Betty smiled at him, and took a step towards him. Mektoub backed away and in his fright knocked over a chair.

"Come, now, Mektoub, Betty and Roger won't harm you," smiled Mother Christmas ; and turning to the children she told them what a kind,



Mektoub came in, carrying a large tray.

faithful friend Mektoub was, and how he cooked their food, and nursed them when they had bad colds, and helped Father Christmas to pack the toys, and was really the best and cleverest Polar Bear in the world.

So Betty and Roger both ran to shake hands with him, and Roger said, "We are awfully glad to meet you, Mektoub ; but it's a great surprise. Nobody told us that a Polar Bear lived with Father Christmas."

The children sat down at the table. Betty, lifting a huge spoonful of bread-and-milk, remarked, "It seems just like a dream, being here, and eating bread-and-milk in Father Christmas's own house."

"I still don't understand why Father Christmas brought you," said Mother Christmas.

"I will explain it all," cried Roger eagerly. "We wanted to see Father Christmas, so we hid behind the door till he had filled our stockings, and then we ran out and asked him to bring us here."

Mother Christmas looked at her husband in the greatest astonishment. "I have never heard of such a thing," she exclaimed. "I really don't know why you brought them, Father Christmas."

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“Father Christmas didn’t really want to bring us,” chimed in Betty. “In fact, he wouldn’t till he had asked Neddy Donkey’s advice, and Neddy said we might come.”

Mother Christmas shook her head in despair. “It is just like you, my dear,” she said to her husband, “to seek advice from a donkey.”

“I am ever so glad we have come,” Betty said. “I like being here.”

But Mother Christmas shook her head again, and began to explain to the children that they had really been very, very thoughtless ; they ought never to have come away from home in such a hurry, without even asking permission from their mother and father. Most likely they would not be able to go home again for a whole year. Father Christmas was only allowed to go down to the earth on Christmas Eve ; the reindeer refused to take him at any other time.

“I’m sure Mummy wouldn’t like us to stay away a whole year,” said Betty blankly. “Besides, we haven’t enough clothes. I have only brought my pyjamas and dressing-gown, and Roger has brought the Rainbow Quilt.”

There was a solemn silence. Something like a

tear trembled on Betty's lashes, and Roger cried hastily, "Perhaps as a very special favour the reindeer might let Father Christmas go down to the earth, just to take us home to London."

"I'm afraid they won't," said Father Christmas. "Those reindeer will never do special favours. You should hear how they talk, and the fuss they make, because they take me down to the earth on Christmas Eve. I am quite sure they would never take me twice in the year. They would tell me that it isn't allowed," and Father Christmas sat down to eat the nice, hot supper Mektoub had prepared for him.

Mother Christmas went off to air beds and sheets and blankets for the children. When she came back her eyes were shining with a wonderful idea. "Father Christmas," she cried, "I have thought of someone who might be able to take Roger and Betty home to-morrow night."

"Who, my dear?"

"Our old friend, Jack Frost."

"My dear, Jack Frost could never carry the children all the way to London. His wings are not strong enough for that."

“ I know. But my idea is this ; the reindeer know perfectly well that you are only allowed to go to the earth once a year, but there is no law to prevent Jack Frost going as often as he pleases. Most likely the reindeer would be quite willing for Jack Frost to drive the children home in the sleigh. You remember that year when you were so ill, and we didn’t think you would be well enough to go to the earth on Christmas Eve ? The reindeer kindly came and told me they didn’t want the children to be disappointed, and they were quite ready to let Jack Frost drive them with the toys.”

Father Christmas leaned forward and kissed his wife on the forehead. “ My dear,” he said, “ I’m sure I don’t know where you get such wonderful ideas from.”

“ Not from a donkey,” said Mother Christmas, laughing.

Father Christmas coughed, and said, “ Before I unharness the reindeer I shall just dash off to Toy Land for a load of toys. I shan’t be gone more than an hour ; and then I shall have a holiday for a few days.”

“ Don’t bring Teddy bears instead of dolls,” teased Mother Christmas.

"My dear, I am not so stupid," said Father Christmas in a hurt voice.

"Of course you are," answered his wife merrily, "but in every other way you are so clever! Besides, you know, the people we laugh about are the ones we love most. So if you have finished your supper you'd better start off, and come back as quickly as you can."

Mektoub handed Father Christmas his warm red muffler and Mother Christmas fastened it round his neck. With a gay little wave of farewell to the children Father Christmas hurried away. Out in the courtyard his voice rang loudly, and floated through the dining-room window. "Really," he was saying to the reindeer, "I know my own business best. We are going to fetch dolls, dolls, DOLLS—not footballs."

Betty and Roger looked at each other, and both of them began to feel that they were indeed in a strange country.

But in a few minutes Mother Christmas came back, and as soon as she smiled at them they were happy again.

"It is very late," she said. "In a few hours it will be the morning of Christmas Day. I am going

to put you both to bed. When you wake up I daresay my good friend Jack Frost will be here, and we shall be able to arrange all about your going home again."

"Is he the Jack Frost who puts ice on the ponds and hangs the hoar-frost on the trees?" Betty asked eagerly.

"Yes," said Mother Christmas, "I'm glad you know all about him. Jack is really a great artist. He uses crystal paint, and with it he paints pictures on the window-panes during the cold weather."

"I know. I've seen his pictures," cried Betty. "They look lovely when the sun shines through them in the early morning."

"He will be pleased if you tell him that," said Mother Christmas, "for he draws his best pictures on children's windows. I am going to ask him to come to breakfast to-morrow and spend the day with us, and I shall ask him to bring Tweeny Bunting, his little servant-boy. Tweeny mixes the paints, washes the brushes, and flies all over the world looking for large, shining window-panes upon which Mr. Jack Frost can paint his pictures."

"What fun!" Roger said. "I hope Tweeny Bunting will come."

“I think it will be lovely to meet Mr. Jack Frost,” Betty said. “He must be a very, very clever man.”

“He is,” smiled Mother Christmas ; “but you may not understand him at first. Besides painting pictures, he writes songs, and he wants to do only those two things all the time. Often he forgets to take his breakfast, or his tea, and if Tweeny Bunting didn’t mend his clothes for him I daresay they would hang on him in tatters. If you ask him to go upstairs to fetch something he will wander absent-mindedly to the kitchen door, and he is nearly always looking for a mislaid pencil, or a lost paint-box. But you must remember that no one in the whole world can paint on the window-panes so beautifully as Jack. The winter would lose its glory without him.”

Mother Christmas’s last words were so earnest that the children grew silent, not knowing what to say.

By and by Mektoub came into the room, with his arms full of pillows and bedclothes.

Mother Christmas had no little beds for the children, so she decided that just for to-night they must sleep one at each end of the long, wide sofa in her

drawing-room. There was really plenty of room on it, and Mektoub busied himself making up a bed at one end for Roger, while at the other end Mother Christmas prepared a bed for Betty.

The children thought it would be great fun to sleep like this, and Roger, in a generous mood, said that Betty might have the Rainbow Quilt at her end of the sofa.

"You mustn't tickle my toes in the night, Roger," Betty said.

"There must be no nonsense," Mother Christmas said firmly. "I want you both to go to sleep very quickly, and then you can see Jack Frost and Tweeny Bunting in the morning."

"And Father Christmas, too?" asked Betty anxiously.

"Yes, of course. He will soon be back home again, and you will see him at breakfast in the morning."

When the two beds were ready Roger and Betty snuggled into their places, one at each end of the sofa, and Mother Christmas tucked them in.

The children both lay quite still for a long time, trying hard to go to sleep. The house had grown very quiet and only a faint glimmer of moonlight

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came in through a long, wide window that looked
towards the snow-fields.

“Betty,” whispered Roger, “are you asleep?”

“No,” Betty whispered back, “but I’m trying
hard to sleep.”

“Well, I’ve remembered something,” Roger
whispered again. “I didn’t say my prayers just
before we went to bed at home. You did, but I
didn’t.”

“I don’t think it matters,” was Betty’s answer.

“It *does* matter,” said Roger firmly. “I am
going to get out of bed and say them.”

“Then you’ll only waken me wide up just when
I’m half-asleep,” complained Betty.

“I can’t help that. I must say my prayers,”
Roger said.

With great difficulty he managed to get out on
to the carpet, and in a firm voice he repeated most
of the prayers he knew.

“That’s enough,” said Betty. “You’ve said
five prayers. Now say ‘Amen’ and get back in
bed. I want to go to sleep.”

But Roger, inspired, began a new one :

Tiger, tiger, burning bright,
In the forest of the night.

"There," he cried triumphantly, opening his eyes and looking at Betty, "that's not a real prayer, but it's beautiful. I'm sure the angels have all enjoyed it."

With a bound among the blankets he was back in his corner, nestling down on the pillow, and ready for sleep.

But Betty was now wide awake and full of wonder about Christmas Day in Christmas Land.

"Shall we have plum-pudding and mince-pies, do you think, Roger?"

"Of course. No doubt they eat them every day in Christmas Land."

"Will there be a Christmas cake?"

"I shouldn't be surprised if there are dozens and dozens."

"But you always ecksaggerate," Betty said sorrowfully.

"I think we ought to stop talking and go to sleep," replied Roger.

"I was nearly asleep," said Betty indignantly, "and then you woke me up with all your prayers."

Roger made no answer. He was feeling very drowsy and was already half-asleep.

"Roger," Betty whispered presently, "Roger!"

ROGER AND BETTY MEET MOTHER CHRISTMAS

But Roger was fast asleep, and with a little sigh Betty rolled over, and was soon asleep herself.

When Mother Christmas stole softly into the room next morning she saw two little sleeping figures wrapped in the blankets. She smiled, and sat down at her desk to write a letter to Mr. Jack Frost. She sealed it in a blue envelope and asked Mektoub to take it as quickly as he could to Jack's palace in the Land of the Snows.



Chapter Four

MR. JACK FROST AND TWEENY BUNTING COME TO CHRISTMAS LAND

BREAKFAST was served very late in Christmas Land that morning, and no Mr. Jack Frost nor Tweeny Bunting turned up to share it. Mektoub had found the Ice Palace where Jack lived in the Land of the Snows shut up and empty.

MR. JACK FROST AND TWEENY BUNTING

"I feel so disappointed Mr. Jack Frost hasn't come," Betty said, as she folded up her napkin and prepared to leave the table.

"I'm sorry, too," said Roger, "because I wanted to see Tweeny Bunting."

"Most likely Jack went down to the earth to paint some special pictures for Christmas Eve, and took Tweeny Bunting with him," said Mother Christmas. "He does sometimes take Tweeny. I suppose you left my note, Mektoub?"

"Yes," said Mektoub. "I tied it on the bell-wire at the front door."

"That's all right, then. Jack will find it when he goes back to the Palace, and he and Tweeny will come here at once."

"Jack is bound to turn up," remarked Father Christmas. "He always seems to come when he's wanted. That's one very good thing about him——"

Even before Father Christmas had finished speaking there was a sharp ring at the door. Father Christmas went to open it and cried, "Bless me, here is Jack! Come in, old fellow."

Mr. Jack Frost stepped gaily into the room, pulling a pair of large silken wings from his shoulders

as he came, and folding them together as one would close a pair of fans. He flung them on the sideboard, and then stopped suddenly, as if rooted to the carpet.

He had just caught sight of Betty in her little chair on the hearthrug. He blushed like a school-boy, and for a moment Betty really thought he was going to turn round and run away.

Jack had a pleasant face and a delightful smile, but he was most oddly dressed, in a silver-green tunic and tight-fitting breeches. His shoes were of glass, pointed at the toes. The hat he held in his hand was curved at the top like a goat's horn. Surely anyone meeting him out in the frozen countryside would take him for some wild Peter Pan of the forests !

His thick curly hair was almost as red as the flames that danced in the fire. He had a trick of sweeping it back with one hand, so that the front locks stood up like the crest of a cock.

He was a very shy man, Betty saw that. His delightful smile had suddenly vanished, and he was toying with his wings on the sideboard as if he longed to put them on and go.

Mother Christmas beckoned Jack to a chair at

her side and said, "These are two children my husband brought from London last night, Betty and Roger Warrington."

Mr. Jack Frost bowed very stiffly.

"We hoped you would come and have breakfast with us," went on Mother Christmas.

"Tweeny and I have both been to have breakfast with the King in the Moon," said Jack. "I did one or two pictures there. Tweeny has just gone on home with my paints and brushes."

"Oh," said Mother Christmas, "then you haven't had my note? I sent Mektoub very early this morning, to ask if you and Tweeny would come and spend the day with us. Mektoub tied the note on the bell-wire."

"Yes? Er—did he?" Jack walked to the window, and stared across at the vast stretches of gleaming snow as though he had never seen snow in his life before.

Mother Christmas tried to put him at his ease, but he could only stammer replies to all her questions.

Mother Christmas, who was a very wise old lady, thought she would leave him alone with the children for a little while; she felt sure they would make

friends if she and Father Christmas were out of the way. So she reminded her husband that the children really had no clothes to wear during the day, and if he would be good enough to look out some of his old robes she would cut them up and let Mektoub make a few simple little garments.

“Very well, my dear,” Father Christmas said.

“Perhaps while we are busy you will talk to the children, Jack,” said Mother Christmas. Without waiting for a reply she and her husband left the room.

Mr. Jack Frost walked across to the sofa and sat down on it, in the middle. He folded his arms and looked very stiff and upright.

Betty and Roger went to him timidly and seated themselves one on each side of him.

Jack fidgeted with his clothes, with his handkerchief, with his hair. Betty looked at him shyly, and then whispered to her brother, “Roger, say something. Be polite.”

Poor Roger screwed up his courage. “Er—Mr. Frost,” he began, “do you like Punch-and-Judy Shows?”

“What are they?” asked Jack. “I have never seen one.”

“ You’ve never seen a Punch-and-Judy Show ? ” asked Roger, amazed. “ Didn’t your mother ever take you to see one when you were a little boy ? ”

“ Never,” said Jack, solemnly shaking his head.

“ Do you like ice-cream ? ” asked Roger, trying again.

“ Ice-cream ? ” repeated Jack in a puzzled voice, “ ice-cream ? What is ice-cream ? My mother never took me to see one of those, either. I make ice, but what can ice-cream be ? ”

Roger breathed hard and looked at Betty in despair. He had tried his best to be polite. It was now her turn.

“ Did you go painting pictures last night, Mr. Frost ? ” asked Betty.

“ I did—early in the evening. I went to England.”

“ And did you paint some pictures there ? ”

“ Quite a lot.”

“ I’m so glad. Now the windows will look lovely for Christmas Day. I am always happy when I see your pictures. They look beautiful in the morning early, when the red sun peeps through them.”

Jack smiled. "I believe I did some good pictures last night," he said. "Everywhere I went I heard children laughing, people singing, and bells ringing. It was a great inspiration to me."

"What kind of pictures did you paint, Mr. Frost?"

"Oh, just the things I see round my Ice Palace in the Land of the Snows, all white and frozen and covered with glittering hoar-frost—trees, flowers, ferns, caverns and feathery plants."

Betty quite lost her shyness, for she saw now that Mr. Jack Frost was not really a big, clever man to be afraid of, but just a boy in men's sizes. Jack's shyness vanished at the same moment and they went on chatting gaily.

"Why don't you draw pictures on the window-panes every night, Mr. Frost?" Betty asked.

"I can't," Jack replied mournfully. "Sometimes I work for days together, and then, night after night, I cannot paint a single leaf or flower."

"But you write songs, don't you, Mr. Frost? Mother Christmas told me you wrote songs and stories, so I think you ought to be always happy."

"I am mostly sad," sighed Jack.

“ Dear me, that’s stupid,” declared Betty.
“ Why are you sad ? ”

“ People make me sad,” Jack replied. “ I am always catching sadness, just as some people catch measles or whooping-cough. If the world held only window-panes I daresay I could be happy. But there are the people. I hear them behind the window-panes. Ah, I can’t tell you what I hear ! It is the saddest thing in life, to be painting a lovely picture on a window-pane and then to hear selfish and sometimes wicked things behind.”

“ I know what you could do, Mr. Frost,” Roger broke in. “ You could put some cotton-wool in your ears, and then you wouldn’t hear the people behind the window-panes.”

“ It’s really like this, you know, Mr. Frost,” Betty said ; “ when people are angry and in tempers they shout. That is when you hear bad words. I am sure if you could hear the kind things people say in their gentle voices you would feel happier.”

“ Will you tell us one of your tales, Mr. Frost, please ? ” asked Roger.

“ Yes, please do,” begged Betty.

Mr. Frost coughed, swept back his hair and began. “ Very well, I will tell you one that my

friend, the King in the Moon, told me early this morning——”

“The *King* in the Moon? Don’t you mean the *Man* in the Moon?” asked Roger, surprised.

“No,” retorted Jack warmly, “I mean the *King* in the Moon, for that is what my friend really is. It is very rude of you people from the earth to call him the *Man* in the Moon. He doesn’t mind, because he is really a charming man, but every time I hear children on the earth singing

The Man in the Moon came tumbling down
And asked the way to Norwich

I want to stop them, and make them sing ‘The *King* in the Moon.’ It is most impolite, and I wish someone would tell them to sing ‘King’ instead of ‘Man.’ He should always be called either the ‘King in the Moon,’ or simply the ‘Moon King.’”

“We might ask Daddy to do something,” suggested Betty. “I think he could write a letter to *The Times*, because he often does.”

“Please go on with the story, Mr. Frost,” begged Roger.

“Very well. This story the Moon King told

me is quite true, because it is about his daughter-

"I never knew he had a daughter," declared Roger.

"Why should you? You have never been to the Moon. You didn't know Father Christmas had a wife till you came here."

"What is the daughter's name?" asked Betty.

"She hasn't a name. Everybody calls her the Moon King's Daughter. I think she is too beautiful to be talked about, and that is why she has no name.

"Has she blue eyes and golden hair?" Betty asked.

"Her eyes are beautiful, and so is her hair," replied Jack slowly. "But the reason why we are always thinking of her is because she comes and goes, and never stays. When she comes you feel that the loveliest thing in life has happened, like springtime, or the first violet blowing open; when she goes you are very lonely, like an autumn tree that has had all its leaves swept off by the wind."

Jack said these words half to himself, and his face looked sorrowful. "I believe there are some women on the earth like that," he added; "but

you won't understand what their going away means till you grow up."

"We would like the story about the Moon King's Daughter," Betty reminded him gently.

"Ah, yes. I must tell you. One evening the Moon King's Daughter thought she would like to go out for a ride all over the sky. So she borrowed a fine rainbow and started off. She had a basket of stars in one hand——"

"Stars! But you can't put stars in a basket," objected Roger.

"Why not?" asked Jack. "You can put eggs in a basket, so why not stars? Personally, I would rather have stars. Eggs are so messy if you drop them."

"What was the Moon King's Daughter going to do with those stars?" asked Roger.

"I really don't know," Jack replied, rumpling his hair in a worried fashion; "she had got them, and that is really all that matters. You don't know what a job it is, catching stars. Have you never seen one slipping down the sky? That is because the Moon King's Daughter is after it."

"I suppose this is a kind of fairy-tale," Roger said. "Betty likes them, but I don't care very

much for them. I like tales about electric trains, and motors, and aeroplanes, and tramways. I don't mind witches . . ."

Betty looked at him reproachfully, and he hastened to add, "But please go on, Mr. Frost. It is very kind of you to tell us a story, even if it is only a fairy-tale."

Poor Jack seemed quite upset. He swept back his hair again and again, and stammered, "Er—er—I am afraid I have forgotten what happened next."

"Never mind," said Roger consolingly. "Now you can tell us another. Tell us about an ugly, cross old witch who rides on a broomstick, a funny old witch who has a black, spitty cat, that hisses at you—like this."

Roger crouched on the carpet, hunched his back, screwed up his mouth, and made a long, hissing noise that merged into a SPIT. Betty looked at him with a shocked face. "You are a rude boy," she cried. "I'm ashamed of you. You spit."

Roger sprang up defiantly. "I was only pretending to be a witch's cat," he said stormily. "If I hadn't been a witch's cat I shouldn't have spit. It isn't rude to spit when you are a spitty cat." Roger's face was red, and his eyes tearful.

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“ Dear me, dear me,” said Jack, “ you mustn’t quarrel. Remember what one of your great poets has written :

Birds in their little nests agree,
So ’tis a shameful sight
When children of one family
Begin to quarrel and fight.”

It was a good thing Mother Christmas, Father Christmas and Mektoub all came in at that moment. Mother Christmas held in her hands a red dress trimmed with ermine, and a red suit with an ermine collar. The children at once forgot all about the “ spitty cat ” and ran gleefully into Mother Christmas’s room to try on their new clothes. They came back strutting like peacocks.

“ What would people say,” cried Betty, dancing up and down the room, “ if they met me in Ladbrooke Square dressed in Father Christmas’s old clothes ? ”

“ I have four pockets ! That’s splendid ! ” said Roger.

“ Mektoub made them,” said Mother Christmas. “ I cut out the clothes and Mektoub stitched them up on his sewing-machine. Hasn’t he made them quickly ? ”

“Thank you so much, Mektoub,” said Roger, “for letting me have four pockets. What a shame I haven’t any marbles to put in them.”

“We have plenty of marbles here,” Mektoub said. “You may have as many as you like, and I will play with you. I am very fond of a game of marbles.”

Father Christmas had drawn Mr. Jack Frost over to the window and was talking earnestly to him. He told him all about the great surprise he had when he saw Betty and Roger in their bedroom in Ladbroke Square, and about Neddy Donkey’s advice, and how he had brought the children home with him. “And you know, old man,” he said, “the children must be taken back to their mother——”

“Certainly,” Jack agreed gravely. “I believe mothers make a great fuss when they lose their children. It is as bad as losing your paint-brushes.”

“I cannot take them. The reindeer would never allow me to drive them. But my wife thinks they would let you do the journey. You know the way to England, don’t you?”

“Of course,” replied Jack. “Follow any cloud and it takes you to England.”

“We live at 24, Ladbroke Square, London,

W.II," Betty chimed in, overhearing part of the conversation.

"I shall be pleased to drive you home to-night," said Jack, "and while I am there I may try to do one or two pictures. I suppose, Father Christmas, the reindeer won't mind if I tie them up to a chimney for an hour or so?"

"Um, I don't know about that," said Father Christmas. "You must ask them. They are sometimes very obliging."

"Then it is settled that Jack will take the children home this evening?" said Mother Christmas.

"Yes," replied Jack, his face still glowing as he thought of the pictures he was going to paint. "I shall be ready to start just when you like. I will ask Tweeny Bunting to clean my brushes and mix my finest paints."

"I wanted Tweeny Bunting to come and spend the day with us. Where is he?" Mother Christmas asked.

"No doubt he has returned to the palace by this time," Jack said. "He would find your note on the bell-wire, but he wouldn't open it, because I suppose it's addressed to me."

"Shall I send Mektoub with another message?"

said Mother Christmas. "I should like Tweeny to come at once. Mektoub can fetch him."

"There is no need for Mektoub to go a single yard," Jack said in a very important voice. "My friend, the King in the Moon, gave me a marvellous Christmas present just as I came away this morning. It is a magic horn. I have only to speak into it, and Tweeny Bunting, far away in the Land of the Snows, will hear my voice."

Full of excitement Jack put his hand in his pocket to find the magic horn. But alas! no horn was there.

"Probably you left it behind," suggested Father Christmas.

"I do hope you haven't lost it, Jack," Mother Christmas said anxiously.

Jack felt in another pocket, and another, looking more and more worried and unhappy. Then suddenly he sprang to the sideboard, lifted up his large brown wings, and said, "Why, of course! I tied it to my wings, so that I shouldn't lose it. I had quite forgotten."

He fumbled among the soft, shining brown folds, and pulled out a curious ivory horn, quite small, and delicately carved. He put it to his mouth and cried, "Tweeny Bunting! Tweeny Bunting!

Fly at once to Mother Christmas's house. I am waiting here for you."

Jack put down his magic horn and said triumphantly, "Tweeny Bunting would hear those words as soon as I said them. I have no doubt he will start on his way at once. In about twenty minutes he will be here."



Roger and Betty were greatly impressed by Jack's magic horn. They wanted to speak through it, and Betty asked if she could call to Ladbroke Square and tell her Mother they were

going back that night. But Mr. Frost shook his head. The magic horn was of no use to anyone but its owner, and could only be heard in the Land of the Snows.

Mektoub, who had been out in the great toy-room, came back with a bag full of marbles, red and blue, green and yellow, and many other bright, shining colours. "Will you come and have a game of marbles with me, Roger?" he asked.

Roger joyfully agreed, and putting his hand in the Polar Bear's hairy paw, he went off to the kitchen.

Betty, toying with Mr. Jack Frost's magic horn, saw that the grown-ups were "talking secrets" by the window. Mother Christmas was smiling, Father Christmas was whispering to Jack, and Jack was sweeping back his hair and saying, "Yes, yes! A lovely idea. We'll fix it all up when Tweeny Bunting comes."

Jack's voice grew louder, and Betty coughed, just to remind them that she was there.

"Well, that will be splendid," Mother Christmas said. "Father Christmas and I will go and see about it, and you stay here and amuse Betty till Tweeny Bunting comes."

Arm in arm, Father Christmas and his wife hurried away, and Jack, with a beaming face, strode across to Betty.

"We are planning a grand surprise for you," he said, "but I mustn't tell you anything about it for the present. What would you like to do till Tweeny comes?"

"I should like you to tell me a story," said Betty.

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

Jack looked troubled. "I really have forgotten my stories," he said.

"Then please, Mr. Frost, if you can't think of a story, will you sing me one of your songs?" she begged.

"Yes, I can sing you a song. I will give you my latest. I wrote it last week, and my friend the Moon King set it to music. Do you know what an octopus is?"

"Yes," Betty said proudly. "It's a fishy thing with eight arms. I saw one in Roger's set of cigarette-cards, 'The Wonders of the Deep,' so I do know."

"My song," said Jack, "is about an octopus who went to buy his Christmas presents. It goes like this :

Lord Octopus swam to the Christmas Fair,
An hour and a half he was swimming there.

First he had to go
For an hour or so
To the slimy block
Of a sandstone rock,
Then swim, swim away
To the big wide bay
Where a stout old whale
Held his Christmas Sale.

MR. JACK FROST AND TWEENY BUNTING

Lord Octopus swam to the Christmas Fair,
An hour and a half he was swimming there.
His two little girls and two little boys
Were waiting at home for their Christmas toys.

And dear old Granny,
And fat Aunt Fanny,
And Cousin Dolly,
And Sister Molly

Would think Lord Octopus quite unpleasant
Unless he brought them a Christmas present.

Lord Octopus swam to the Christmas Fair,
An hour and a half he was swimming there.
He went to a counter of splendid toys,
He bought lovely gifts for his girls and boys.
He bought them some engines and balls and bats,
And dollies with dresses and shoes and hats.

He bought for Granny
A sweet nightcap;
To please Aunt Fanny,
A game of snap;
For Cousin Dolly
A winter wrap;
For Sister Molly
A sea-route map

(For Molly was always losing her way
When she went to shop in the big wide bay).
With all these wonderful gifts and toys
For the grown-up folks, for the girls and boys,
Tied up into parcels and packets strong,
Lord Octopus merrily swam along.

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On ev'ry arm he hung a present
And said, 'It's really rather pleasant,
To have eight arms instead of two.
What can those human creatures do
With just two arms for all the toys
They buy to please their girls and boys?'

"It's a very amusing po'try," said Betty warmly.
"I wish you would draw a picture of Lord Octopus going along with all the presents on his eight arms. Then you could print it in a book, like Daddy does."

Roger ran gaily into the room, followed by Mektoub, Father Christmas, and Mother Christmas.

"Has Tweeny Bunting come yet?" asked Mother Christmas, glancing round.

"Not yet," replied Jack Frost. "I expect him every minute."

"Look, Betty," said Roger, going over to his sister's side, "I have won simply hundreds of marbles. Just hear them rattle in my pockets." Roger shook the ends of his red coat and laughed happily at the sound of the jingling marbles.

"Roger plays very well," Mektoub said. "He knocked about a dozen marbles out of the ring at a shot."



On ev'ry arm he hung a present.

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“And once I knocked out sixteen!” said Roger. “How many have I won altogether, Mektoub?”

“About sixty.”

“He always does ecksaggerate,” said Betty. “Mummy says so.”

“Come and have a look at my marbles, Betty,” Roger said. “They are the prettiest you ever saw in your life. One is a glass one, with coloured stripes in it.”

Roger sat down on the woollen hearthrug, and Betty knelt at his side. “See that one?” asked Roger, taking up the largest and squinting through it. “When you hold it up to the light and look through it, everything seems edged with rainbow. You have a look. Shut one eye, then you’ll see better with the other.”

Betty obeyed, and said she could see rainbow lines round all the furniture.

Next Mektoub had a look, and agreed that the sight was wonderful. He would search among the sacks of marbles in the store-room and see if he could find another large glass one with coloured stripes, for Betty.

Mother Christmas seemed to be growing more



He draws his best pictures on children's windows."

and more anxious about Tweeny Bunting. "You are quite sure Tweeny heard your voice, aren't you, Jack?" she asked. "Perhaps the ivory horn was not in working order."

"I am sure it was all right," Jack answered. "Tweeny will soon be here."

"Please, Mother Christmas," Roger said, looking up from his marbles, "have you any aeroplanes in your store-rooms?"

"Not yet, Roger. Father Christmas doesn't bring them from Toy Land till about the end of October. He always brings the dolls first, because Mektoub and I like to have plenty of time to make pretty clothes for them."

"And besides," added Father Christmas, "dolls are really the only toys we feel quite certain about. We know that little girls have always wanted them, and always will want them; but we never quite know what the boys are going to ask for. Towards Christmas Eve they begin to write letters to me, to tell me what they would like in their stockings. Last year most of the boys asked for aeroplanes; but I can remember a time when they all wanted tin soldiers."

"I remember, too," chimed in Mother Christ-

mas. "It was the year when so many people on the earth went mad."

"Why did the people go mad?" asked Roger.

"We really don't know," said Father Christmas, stroking his long beard. "We haven't been able to find out to this day. They went mad very suddenly, at the beginning of harvest-time in your country. They began to fight one another, not as cats or dogs fight, but in very strange, and we thought very cruel ways. Great crowds of them marched out to kill other crowds, in every way they could think of."

"Some of them hid in deep ditches," added Mother Christmas, "and then ran out and stabbed at one another like wild creatures; others climbed high up in the air in funny little houses and dropped some queer-looking objects that burst into flames when they touched the ground. Houses and churches toppled over, and many of our children were killed."

"And to this day," added Father Christmas, thoughtfully stroking his beard, "we don't know why they did it, nor what was the good of it all."

"I think it was the war," explained Roger. "I have heard Daddy talk about it. He was a

Captain, and the King gave him a medal and an M.B. after his name."

"An M.C.," corrected Betty.

"Well, I suppose they enjoyed it," said Mother Christmas. "But if they are going to do it again I should like to send all our children away to another country till they've finished."

Mother Christmas paused—there was a soft tap-tapping at the window, a glimmer of brown silken wings fluttering against the panes. "May I come in? Please let me in," piped a sweet little voice.

"Tweeny!" cried Jack in delight. "Here is Tweeny." He stepped forward and opened the door. For just a moment Tweeny Bunting stood erect on the window-sill, his shining wings outspread. Then he fluttered lightly to the carpet and with both hands clutched at the ends of Jack's velvet coat.

He was a pretty little boy, with waving brown hair and large dark eyes. A pair of moth-like wings, that seemed to be made of silk and gossamer, swept from his shoulders. He was dressed in a suit of shimmering brown, trimmed with feathers as soft as the down from the breast of a dove.

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He looked up at his master. And then everyone saw that his face was pale, and his body was trembling as if SOMETHING VERY TERRIBLE INDEED had happened to him.



Chapter Five

WE FIRST HEAR OF WHIPPER WHOPPER

MR. JACK FROST put his hand on Tweeny's head and asked, very gently, "What is the matter, Tweeny? What's happened, old chap?"

Betty was quite surprised to hear the trembly tone in Mr. Frost's voice.

Tweeny breathed hard and answered, "When I reached home this morning I went straight into the studio and put away your paints and washed the brushes."

“ Yes ? ”

“ Then I heard a very loud knocking on the front door.”

“ Yes ? ”

“ I went down to open it, and there stood Whipper Whopper ! ”

Jack's face became stern and angry. “ Whipper Whopper ! ” he cried. “ What did he want ? It is just like him, to sneak to my palace when I am not at home.”

“ He said if I would tell him how you make your ice, and what you put into your hoar-frost to make it sparkle so brightly, he would give me a diamond chain and the Golden Order of the King,” replied Tweeny Bunting.

“ And then what did you say, Tweeny ? ”

Tweeny Bunting drew his quaint little figure up to its full height and replied, “ I said to Whipper Whopper, ‘ Sir ! There is the door. Please go ! ’ ”

“ You are a hero, Tweeny,” said Mr. Jack Frost very proudly. “ Whipper deserves to be fr-fr-frozen ” (here Jack made a slithery sound with his teeth) “ in his own ice.”

Jack glanced at the others, to see what they

thought of his bold words, and said suddenly to Roger, "What would you do to Whipper Whopper, Roger?"

"I really don't know," Roger answered. "I haven't seen Whipper Whopper. I don't know who he is."

"Then I must tell you," Jack said solemnly. "Whipper Whopper is a Snake in the Grass, a Dog in the Manger, a Thief in the Night. He is the maker of ice and hoar-frost to their Royal Majesties the Ice King and the Ice Queen, who rule over the Land of the Snows. He is only allowed to paint pictures on the windows of the royal palace, but I, of course, may fly down to the earth and paint wherever I will. Every window in the world is mine, so to speak.

"Once a year we have a contest, to see who can paint the loveliest picture. I always win, and for that reason Whipper Whopper hates me—simply hates me. Now, as you see, he is trying to get my secrets from Tweeny Bunting, and find out how I mix my paints."

Tweeny Bunting was gazing shyly at Betty, who had drawn so closely to him that his wings swept her shoulder.

“Once,” went on Mr. Jack Frost, “the Ice King asked me to paint a special Christmas picture on the Queen’s drawing-room window. I painted one of my best pictures, and what do you think happened?”

“I don’t know,” replied Roger.

“When I had finished my picture,” said Jack, “the Ice Queen was so pleased with it that she said it must remain on her window for a whole week. But during the first night somebody threw a stone and the window was cracked in every direction. Who did it no one ever found out—but I knew very well!”

“Whipper Whopper!” cried Roger.

“Yes, that Snake in the Grass, that Dog in the Manger, that Thief in the Night—Whipper Whopper.”

“Why didn’t you catch him, and make him tell the Queen he did it?” asked Roger.

“We had a spell of glorious weather about that time,” said Jack, “and I went off to the earth painting pictures and quite forgot about Whipper Whopper. It is wonderful, Roger, to have a paint-brush; the moment you begin to use it you forget all your troubles.”

WE FIRST HEAR OF WHIPPER WHOPPER

Betty and Tweeny Bunting had seated themselves side by side on the window-seat. "Tweeny Bunting," said Betty, "I wish I could fly. Your wings are lovely."

"There's nothing clever about flying," said Tweeny. "You just spread out your wings and away you go."

"But I haven't any wings," said Betty. "That's the trouble."

Roger walked across to them and asked, "Tweeny, did you hear Mr. Frost's voice when he called to you through his magic horn?"

"Yes, I heard quite plainly," Tweeny said, "but Whipper Whopper had just come and I had to wait till he had gone away, and then bolt and bar all the doors lest he should break into the house."

"He could easily throw a stone at one of the windows and get in that way," suggested Roger.

Poor Tweeny looked quite disturbed at that idea. Then he said, "Oh, I don't think he would. Besides, even if he did he would never be able to get at the little book where Mr. Frost has written his recipe for making ice and hoar-frost. It is kept in

a secret cupboard, and I carry the key on a ribbon round my neck. Look here."

Tweeny unfastened his tunic and showed a tiny silver key fastened to a piece of velvet ribbon.

"I should rather like to see Whipper Whopper, you know," Roger said.

"I shouldn't," cried Betty. "I don't want to see a man who is——"

"A Snake in the Grass, a Dog in the Manger, a Thief in the Night," finished Roger.

Little did Betty and Roger know of all the adventures that would befall them before the day was over, nor of what would happen when they did see Whipper Whopper.

"I think we won't talk about Whipper Whopper," Tweeny Bunting said. "I am not afraid of him as long as I have this silver key safely round my neck."

"Suppose he caught you, and stole the key from you?" Roger asked.

"Don't say such horrid things, Roger," Betty said. "You mustn't frighten Tweeny."

"I don't b'lieve anything would frighten Tweeny," Roger declared, looking at the little boy with great admiration.

WE FIRST HEAR OF WHIPPER WHOPPER

Tweeny's eyes shone, and now he and Roger were friends.

"Do you play marbles, Tweeny?" Roger asked. "I will take you into the kitchen and we can have a game."

"No, Roger, I have a nicer plan than that," Mother Christmas said, hearing this remark. "You can all come out in the kitchen and help me make mince-pies for tea. There is no time to make a Christmas cake, or a Christmas pudding; but I believe I have a jar of mince-meat somewhere in my cupboard, and I can soon make some pastry. After tea we are going to give you a very nice surprise, and show you something you will remember when you are at home again."

"I love surprises," said Roger. "Will it be a Christmas Tree?"

"You mustn't ask questions," smiled Mother Christmas. "Mr. Jack Frost is going to prepare the surprise, and you will see what it is after tea."

Betty and Roger and Tweeny went off with Mother Christmas, Tweeny first taking off his wings, carefully folding them, and putting them in a drawer.

Out in the kitchen they had a wonderful time.

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Mektoub found little blue aprons for all of them to put on. Mother Christmas rolled out the pastry, and told the children they could be her little helpers, and finish making the pies.



So Betty cut the pastry into round shapes and fitted them into the mince-pie tins ; Roger filled the pies with mince-meat, and Tweeny put the tops on. But Betty said that putting the mince-meat in with a spoon was the nicest task of all, and it wasn't quite fair if Roger did that all the time.

Mother Christmas agreed with her, and sug-

gested they should fill six each in turn. In this way they soon finished the pies ; and afterwards there was all the fun of sugaring them with the sugar-sifter when they came out of the oven, cooked a delicious shade of brown.

Everybody helped to decorate the dining-room and put crackers and coloured lights on the tea-table. Mektoub hung up coloured lanterns and sprigs of holly. Mr. Jack Frost tried to nail a Christmas greeting on the wall ; but he hit his finger so hard that he dropped the hammer and broke a vase on the mantelpiece.

The tea-table was laden with good things to eat. The mince-pies tasted delicious, and when Betty, Roger and Tweeny Bunting bit into theirs, they found threepenny pieces inside.

After tea, Mother Christmas suggested that Mr. Jack Frost should sing for them, and Tweeny begged him to give them his new song about the little dog that was lost and found again.

“ Ahem,” said Jack, “ I haven’t practised it very much. I only wrote it last week, when I was painting pictures on a window-pane in Buckinghamshire. I heard a little boy named Philip crying because he had lost his dog, so I picked up an old

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paper-bag that was lying on the ground, and wrote a song about the lost dog. This is it."

Jack cleared his throat, and began to sing :

Who's seen a little pup with black on his tail,

And black on the end of his nose ?

A little fat pup with a little fat tail

That waggles wherever he goes ?

He ran down the yard and barked at the cat
(Cook says she is certain of that).

Old Mr. Johnson says that at ten

When he came in the yard with a sitting-hen

That pup lay close to the garage door,

And was fast asleep on the red-brick floor.

Who's seen a little pup with black on his tail,

And black on the end of his nose ?

A little fat pup with a little fat tail

That waggles wherever he goes ?

Old Mr. Johnson knows I am sad.

He patted my head and said, " Poor lad !

I'm sure you miss that little pup,

But he'll come back, so just cheer up.

I'm ever so sorry he's run away ;

But he'll come back at the end of the day."

Who's seen a little pup with black on his tail,

And black on the end of his nose ?

A little fat pup with a little fat tail

That waggles wherever he goes ?

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I've looked in the orchard and down the lane,
I've walked through the meadow and back again.
I've searched the wood as well as I could ;
But he isn't there,
Not anywhere !

The butcher boy has been with the meat.
He says he'll look for him in the street.
He says he knows how worried we are—
He hopes that pup isn't killed by a car !

Who's seen a little pup with black on his tail,
And black on the end of his nose ?
A little fat pup with a little fat tail
That waggles wherever he goes ?

My Auntie Hilda is very nice.
She's been as far as the market twice
And asked the people on the way
For a little fat pup that's gone astray.
She asked the policeman if he would look
(Policeman's a very great friend of Cook)
And said she'd pay him half-a-crown
To give to anyone in the town
Who found a pup that had gone astray
And brought him back at the end of the day.

Who's seen a little pup with black on his tail,
And black on the end of his nose ?
A little fat pup with a little fat tail,
That waggles wherever he goes ?

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Cook is standing beside my bed.

Her eyes are bright,

Her cheeks are red.

"I'm glad you're not asleep," she says.

"Guess where your pup has been?" she says.

"He jumped in a box, and the lid banged down.

He jumped in a box and rode through the town

With the man who brings the bacon and eggs—

That man with a beard, and shortish legs.

He jumped in a box and rode in the van

With some geese and a pig that belonged to the man.

And the man, he says, from his seat outside

He'd never hear if a little pup cried."

So now I've found my dear little pup,

With black on the end of his nose.

My little fat pup with a little fat tail

That waggles wherever he goes.

Betty and Roger were delighted with this song, and Roger said Mr. Frost was very clever to write it all on a paper bag.

"It reminds me of one of Daddy's," Betty said, "only his is about a pig, not a pup. I wish you would print a book of po'tries, Mr. Frost."

"Ahem," Jack said, looking very important. "I must now leave you for a short time. Before you start for home we have planned a special Christmas Show for you, and I think it will be a very

great surprise. I want Mother Christmas and Father Christmas to come and help me, please.”

Mektoub stayed behind with the children, and kept them amused till “the surprise” was ready. He put on one of Father Christmas’s robes, and marched up and down the room with a long beard of cotton-wool hanging from his mouth. He looked so funny, with a little black nose peeping out from the cotton-wool, that the children laughed till the tears ran down their faces.

At last Mr. Jack Frost peeped round the dining-room door and said, “We are quite ready now. You may bring the children in, Mektoub.”

So Mektoub slipped out of the red robe, threw away his beard of cotton-wool, and was a white Polar Bear again. He took Betty and Roger and Tweeny across the courtyard into a large hall and seated them in red-plush chairs.

Roger and Betty leaned forward eagerly. A long curtain hung at the end of the hall. There must be a stage behind it. Most likely they were going to have a Christmas Pantomime, like the one Carline took them to see in London last year.

Mr. Jack Frost sat down at a piano, and began to play soft, dreamy music. Father Christmas pulled

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aside the curtain, and there marched on to the stage a company of the most wonderful and beautiful dolls Betty had ever seen in her life.

The dolls glided to the edge of the stage and



bowed in a graceful fashion, and Mr. Jack Frost called out in a loud voice, "We are now going to have the dolls' Christmas Dance."

Jack's fingers swept over the keys. Perhaps he had never played such magic music before. Sometimes the sound seemed like the waves dancing, and the dolls were keeping time as they floated over the

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stage. Then there was a movement like the patter of raindrops and the tinkle of bells, and the dolls' feet seemed to patter and tinkle with the music.

As soon as the dance came to an end the dolls all stretched out their pretty arms to Betty and began to sing in clear, sweet voices the following song :

Ev'ry little girl must have a doll once.

Ev'ry little girl loves a doll.

Dark or fair,

Straight or curly hair,

Eyes of blue,

Brown or greyish hue,

Choose the one you think is sweet,

Choose the one whose dress is neat,

Choose one, choose one,

Choose one now !

To-day's the dolls' parade.

The dolls are all displayed.

Choose one !

Choose the one that's nicely dressed

Choose the one you think is best.

Choose one, choose one,

Choose one now !

Ev'ry little girl must have a doll once,

Ev'ry little girl loves a doll.

Short or tall,

Baby dollie small,

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French doll grand,
Dolls from ev'ry land—
Choose the one you'd like to-day,
Choose the one you'd take away,
Choose one, choose one,
Choose one now !

Their song finished, the dolls stood perfectly still, looking with smiling faces at Betty.

Betty leaned forward in her red-plush chair, her face glowing with excitement.

“ I don't understand,” she gasped. “ Am I to choose one of them ? ”

“ You have to choose the doll you like best, and then Father Christmas will bring you one just like it next year,” Mr. Jack Frost explained.

“ But I can't choose,” cried Betty. “ They are all so lovely I don't know which one to choose.”

“ In that case,” said Mother Christmas, “ I had better choose one for you nearer the time.”

“ Yes, that would be best,” Betty agreed.

The dolls marched off the stage to Jack's gay music. Betty watched till the last fluttering skirt had vanished, and then she said, drawing a long breath, “ Oh, it was a lovely show ! I shall tell

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Daddy all about it, 'cause he makes theatre shows, you know."

"The programme isn't ended," said Mr. Jack Frost. "There's another surprise coming!"

Father Christmas drew the curtain, so that the stage was hidden again, and the children waited, wondering what they were going to see next.

Jack began a lively thumping and tum-tumming on the piano, and now, with the curtains back and the stage spread out before them, the children watched a wonderful procession of Christmas Toys.

All the toys from Toy Land took part in it. One behind the other they marched; tin trumpets, with tinny little legs; balls, elephants, picture-books and Teddy bears; engines and trains, puffing along on little wheels; bats and wickets and drums and mouth organs, monkeys on sticks, a jack-in-the-box, clockwork boats; and every other toy one could think of, all went marching across the stage. And as they marched, the toys sang:

Roger, Roger, would you like a toy?
One for a little girl and one for a boy?

You may choose to-day
The one you'd take away;

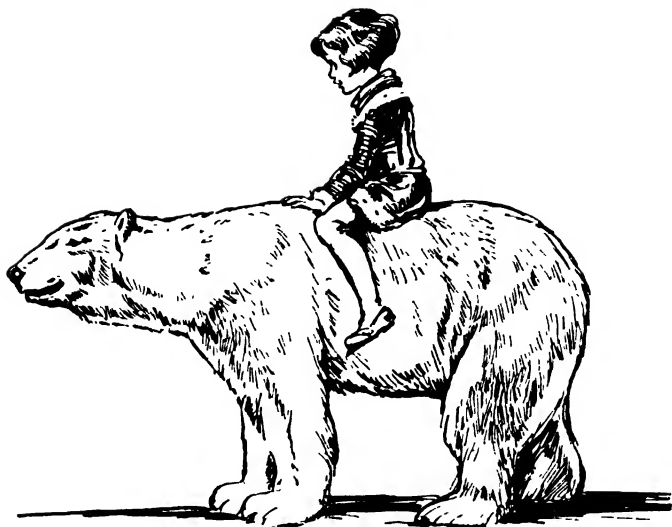
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A cricket-ball or bat,
A clockwork dog or cat,
A splendid watch and chain,
A ship, a car, a train,
A set of wooden blocks,
A Chinese-puzzle box,
A trumpet or a book—
Now's your chance to look !

Roger, Roger, would you like a toy ?
One for a little girl and one for a boy ?

But Roger sat as in a dream, and could not find a word to say till the last toy had marched off the stage, and the last note of Jack's music had died away. Then he drew a long breath and said solemnly, "It is the most marvellous show I ever saw in all my life."

And for once Betty did not think he was "eck-saggerating."



Chapter Six

THE MOON KING AND JIP JOPPA

GETTING ready for the journey home took up a great deal of time. Roger and Betty were both very excited, and still had a great deal to say about that wonderful March of the Toys.

Mr. Jack Frost walked up and down the dining-room and gave Tweeny Bunting many instructions about what he was to do in case Whipper Whopper turned up again at the palace in the Land of the Snows. For Jack had now decided

to stay on the earth for a night or two and paint a few pictures. His paint-brushes and paints were ready, and he was quite certain he was going to do some of his best work.

Father Christmas did not think the reindeer would be willing to wait for Jack. He thought they would want to start back as soon as they had taken the children to London.

But Jack said confidently, "Oh, I feel sure the reindeer will be happy to stay on the earth for a day or two. They will be glad to have a little rest after so many journeys to Toy Land."

"Don't be too certain about that, Jack," remarked Mother Christmas. "One never quite knows what the reindeer will do. I shouldn't be at all surprised if they refuse to take you to the earth. We may wake up in the morning and find you all back here in Christmas Land."

"I shouldn't mind that at all if only Mummy were with us," Betty said.

Mother Christmas began to wrap up the children and make them snug and warm for the journey. She put the blue woollen dressing-gown over Betty's red clothes, and fastened the Rainbow Quilt round Roger's shoulders.

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Roger strutted up and down the room and said, "Won't Carline be surprised when she sees me dressed like this ! "

"What's that rattly noise you make when you walk, Roger ? " Betty asked.

"All the marbles I have won," Roger said grandly. "Mektoub says I may take them home with me."

"Hurry up, everybody," Father Christmas called from the courtyard. "The reindeer are becoming quite cross. They say they will wait only five minutes longer."

"Oh dear, oh dear ! " Mr. Jack Frost cried, "where did I put my tube of crystal paint ? "

"Here it is," said Tweeny Bunting quietly.

"Ah, thanks, Tweeny. Now please get my wings ready. No—I'll leave them here till I come back. If I am driving the reindeer I shan't need them."

"Hadn't you better take them, even if you don't put them on ? " Tweeny asked anxiously.

"No, no. The reindeer are in a hurry. We mustn't wait," and Jack sped off to the sleigh.

"Jump on my back, Roger, and have a last ride," Mektoub said. With his arms clinging

tightly round the Polar Bear's furry neck, Roger rode out into the courtyard. Betty followed clinging to Mother Christmas's hand. "I shall never, never forget you, Mother Christmas," she said. "Every year I shall write a letter to you."

Now they were seated in the sleigh, Mr. Jack Frost high up on the driver's seat ; Roger and Betty behind, almost smothered in thick rugs and furs.

The children waved their hands to their friends, and Father Christmas and Mother Christmas waved theirs back. Mektoub lifted up an old broom, to which he had tied a coloured scarf, and he shook it up and down till the children were out of sight. Tweeny Bunting held out both arms and fluttered his beautiful brown wings in a sad farewell.

For the first part of the journey the night was clear and cloudless and the sky was filled with stars. But after a time a sad little wind began to moan, and grey clouds gathered. Soon a thick mist blotted everything out, and Jack could not see where he was going.

"Please go straight down to the earth," Jack shouted to the reindeer. "You know the way."

The reindeer made no reply. They plunged higher and higher in the night air, and raced faster and faster on their way, till Roger and Betty were both quite giddy.

"Are you making for the earth?" they heard Jack asking anxiously.

They could not hear the reindeer's answer, but they heard Jack talking in a quick, jerky voice, and soon he was shouting so angrily that they felt quite frightened. The sound of shouting and angry voices went on for a long time, till at last Betty and Roger were tired out, and nestling back in the sleigh they fell fast asleep.

A bump and a bang woke them up. They leaned forward, and saw that they had landed somewhere, but where they did not know. The country looked quite strange to them. A soft flush of sunrise touched everything with an unearthly glow. Betty looked up at the steep hill in front of them, and saw a beautiful castle soaring among the trees at the top. Behind the snow-white domes were little rosy clouds, and Betty felt sure that the sleigh had fallen into a magic land.

Suddenly Roger noticed that the reindeer were no longer fastened to the sleigh. The long, glittering

shafts were empty, the bright scarlet reins were broken.

“Where are the reindeer?” Roger asked.

“They’ve run away,” replied Mr. Jack Frost dolefully.

“Run away!” echoed Roger. “Then where are we?”

“On the Moon,” Jack said.

Roger and Betty looked at each other, and could not say another word.

“There’s nothing to worry about,” Jack said. “My friend the Moon King lives on top of the hill in front of us. You can see his castle up yonder. We’ll go along and ask him to take us in. In a few hours the reindeer will probably turn up again, and in better tempers, I hope!”

Silently the three of them began to climb the hill-side. Jack gave a hand each to the children and helped them along.

“It’s a dreadful climb,” gasped Roger. “I think it must be like climbing Snowdon. Mummy and Daddy climbed Snowdon on their last holiday and it took them two and a half hours.”

“We shall be up in about half an hour,” said Jack.



The Moon King lives in the castle up yonder.

On and on they went, and at last they reached the top of the hill. Mr. Jack Frost led Roger and Betty through a wooden gateway into a dusky garden, and along a path to a great door. He pulled at the bell-rope, and a man, with a very young face and a cluster of snow-white hair, peeped cautiously out. "Ah, it's you, sir," he said, when he caught sight of Jack. "Come in, sir. His Majesty will be delighted to see you."

"Thanks, Jip Joppa," Jack replied, and still holding Roger and Betty by the hand he marched across the wide hall and into the Moon King's dining-room.

The Moon King—rather a fat old gentleman with a round, jolly face—rose from a high-backed leather chair and greeted his friend heartily. "So glad to see you, old chap. Whom have you brought with you?"

"Betty and Roger," said Jack sadly; and he blurted out all the story of his unfortunate journey. The reindeer were supposed to go down to the earth, to London, he said, and take Roger and Betty back to their mother. But they had absolutely refused to go; they said they would go to the Moon, and nowhere else.



A man, with a very young face and snow-white hair, peeped cautiously out.

“And at that,” said Jack, wiping the beads of perspiration from his brow, “I completely lost my temper. I told those reindeer they were the most obstinate, selfish, unkind, idiotic animals I had ever met. I told them they had lost the sense they were born with. I called them—but no, I cannot tell you ; it was so rude of me !”

“Daddy sometimes says things like that when his tax-papers come,” observed Roger.

Mr. Jack Frost took no notice of Roger’s remark. He went on talking, in a distracted fashion, to his friend the Moon King. “I am entirely to blame,” he said. “If I hadn’t lost my temper and spoken so rudely the reindeer would never have played this trick on me. The moment I used that insulting word they rushed over here, at a dizzying pace, shot us down at the bottom of the hill, and bolted—simply bolted.”

“And then we had to climb all the way up here, like Daddy and Mummy climbed Snowdon—Your Majesty,” put in Roger.

The Moon King smiled. “Now listen to me, Jack,” he said to his friend ; “you really must stop worrying. If the reindeer refused to take you to the earth you couldn’t make them go. If they had

made up their minds to bring you here nothing would stop them ; we all know how obstinate those reindeer are. Be thankful they brought you here where breakfast is always ready at sunrise. I will ask Jip Joppa to have the meal served at once. Betty and Roger must be hungry."

But neither Roger nor Betty felt at all hungry. They were gazing with interest round the great dining-room, with its pleasant, golden-brown walls, its carpet of daffodil-yellow, and bright fire glowing on the hearth.

They watched the servants putting pretty flowered china and silver knives and forks on the table. They would have been quite happy if only poor Mr. Jack Frost had not looked so sad and wretched.

But all the time Jack sat by the piano, his head bowed on his hands, a picture of sorrow and woe.

"I am terribly worried," he said, "simply terribly worried ! What shall we do if the reindeer never turn up again ? How shall we be able to leave the Moon ?"

"I suppose we are a very long way from London," Roger remarked gravely.

"More than two hundred thousand miles," Jack said gloomily. "But the distance would be

nothing to me if only I had brought my wings. Why, oh why, did I leave them behind in Christmas Land ? ”

“ Tweeny Bunting did want you to bring them, you know, Mr. Frost,” remarked Betty.

“ I know, but I didn’t want to wear them in the sleigh, and I thought it would be a nuisance to carry them,” Jack said.

“ If I were you, Mr. Frost,” Betty said seriously, “ I would make a little case for my wings and have them always with me, even when I didn’t want to wear them.”

“ I shall never forgive myself for that quarrel with the reindeer, never, NEVER,” was all Jack said.

Betty felt sorry for him. She did wish she could say something to cheer him up, for then things wouldn’t seem so bad, not even if they were worse. And suddenly to her delight, the Moon King made a remark which caused Jack to break into smiles at once.

“ My dear fellow,” said the Moon King, “ I have set that latest song of yours to music. I think it goes very well. We’ll try it over after breakfast.”

“ Good,” said Jack, smiling happily. “ I’m so glad you’ve thought of a tune. Yes, we’ll try it

over after breakfast. I wonder if Roger and Betty will like it."

"What are the words about?" asked Betty.

"About a cheeky young bird who once came and perched on a window-sill where I was painting," replied Jack. "I scribbled my poem while he was there, and he twittered and made fine fun about it."

"Did you write it on a paper bag?" asked Roger.

"No, I happened to have my note-book with me."

Jip Joppa now came in, bringing hot, smoking dishes on a large tray. Betty could not quite make up her mind if he were a young man with white hair, or an old man with a young face. He was very kind, she felt sure, and he seemed to be pleased they had come.

The Moon King invited Roger and Betty to take their places at the table, one on his right hand and the other on his left. He made Jip Joppa serve them with porridge and cream, and with delicious grape-fruit, and he gave Mr. Jack Frost his favourite dish of fried mushrooms and kidney. When his guests were served he leaned back in his chair and

THE MOON KING AND JIP JOPPA

called, in a most important voice, "Bring me my DIET SHEET, Jip Joppa."

Jip Joppa marched to the sideboard and handed His Majesty a card in a silver frame. The Moon King looked at it and said, "Grape-fruit, yes, that



is on my Diet Sheet. Tomatoes, yes, those are on my Diet Sheet. Ham-and-egg pie—no, that isn't on. What a shame! No pastry allowed! How I hate this Diet Sheet."

"What is a Diet Sheet, Your Majesty?" asked Roger.

“ This is it,” replied the Moon King, showing the framed card to Roger. “ In the first column are all the things the doctor says I may eat every day, and in the second are the things I mustn’t take at all. Of course, all the things I enjoy, like nice fat ham, and the very special ham-and-egg pies Jip Joppa makes himself, are in the second column.”

“ But why must you have a Diet Sheet, Your Majesty ? ” persisted Roger.

“ Because I am getting too fat,” the Moon King said sadly. “ My doctor told me that if I did not have a Diet Sheet I should become the fattest Moon King in history. I think that would be simply dreadful, to go down in history as ‘ The Fat King in the Moon.’ ”

With this no one could disagree, and the meal went on in silence till the Moon King suddenly helped himself to a dish of porridge and a spoonful of thick cream. That was more than Jip Joppa could bear. He rushed to his master’s side, and cried in an imploring voice, “ Your Majesty ! Oh, Your Majesty ! THAT IS NOT ON YOUR DIET SHEET.”

No, I suppose it isn’t,” the Moon King re-

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plied. "All right, Jip Joppa, I won't eat it. You may take it away."

When breakfast was over the Moon King opened the piano, put a sheet of music on it, and said, "Now, Jack, come and try the new tune. A lively song will cheer you up and help you to forget your troubles."

Jack sat down, ran his fingers over the keys, and played and sang his latest song :

Young Tom Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit
(You think that's a long name ? That's only half of it !
His full name is Sing-Song, Tip-Tap, Wait-A-Bit,
Tom Tim Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit),
He's very fond of catching flies and likes a worm to eat,
He thinks the crumbs you throw to him a most delicious treat.

Young Tom Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit
(You think that's a long name ? That's only half of it !
His full name is Sing-Song, Tip-Tap, Wait-a-Bit,
Tom-Tim-Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit),
Upon a crooked cherry-tree at early dawn he'll sit,
And sing a song called "Twitter-dum-and-twitter-twutter-twit."

But though he dearly loves to sing he knows but that refrain,
And so when he has finished it he just begins again.

Young Tom Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit
(You think that's a long name ? That's only half of it !

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

His full name is Sing-Song, Tip-Tap, Wait-a-Bit,
Tom Tim Tiddly-Widdly, Diddly-Diddly-Dit),
He perched upon a window-sill to see what I would write,
And in his saucy, twinkling eyes I saw a mocking light.
He said, "You take that pen of yours, you write about a bird,
And nobody with any sense will stop to read a word!"

The gay, rollicking tune, Jack's jolly voice, and the funny sound of the bird's name, delighted Roger and Betty. They clapped their hands when the song was ended and told Mr. Frost it was perfectly lovely.

Their delight pleased Jack, and he offered to sing them another song he had just written. But he could not remember where he had put the music. He felt in all his pockets in turn, unrolled paper after paper, and at last found the sheet he wanted crumpled among his paints. He smoothed it out, placed it before him on the piano, leaned back in his chair, and began to sing merrily :

A Cat who was a Carpenter once planned to go to sea,
His vessel was a water-cask with room enough for three.
A Parrot and a Porcupine made up the company.

They said, "We'll go
To Tally Ho,
Then to Behring Bay,
For to sail away
On a summer day
Is marvellous fun, you know!"

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The Cat who was a Carpenter rigged sails upon a mast,
He said a breeze would rise up soon to let them travel fast,
And all the sailors on the sea would watch them gliding past.

The sails were white,
A charming sight,
Marked with stripes of red,
And the Parrot said
As he wagged his head,
"The colour's exactly right."

The Porcupine took up his flute, the Parrot sang a song.
The Cat stared through a telescope the while they sailed along.
And mewed an angry little mew each time the tune went wrong.

Then in the sky
The moon rose high,
Crescent-shaped and bright.
"'Tis a sultry night,
I'd sleep if I might,"
Exclaimed the Cat with a sigh.

The Stars went in, the sun shone out, the night was changed
to day.

The Parrot said the Cat had slept as long as sailors may.
The Cat awoke and spied a mouse among the rocks at play.

Still half-asleep,
He gave a leap
And landed on the shore.
Then he stayed ashore
And returned no more
To life on the briny deep.

This was very amusing, Betty thought, and she asked Mr. Frost if she might have a copy of it to take home to Mummy. She would like to ask Mummy to play and sing it at bedtime.

Jack replied, "I shall be pleased to give you a copy of the song, of course, but how do we know you will ever be able to take it home?"

And at this dark thought all Jack's despair came back again. He got up from the piano, walked up and down the room, rumpling his hair.

"Mother Christmas will be waiting," he said, "waiting — waiting — and waiting. When the reindeer turn up in Christmas Land without me she and her husband will be worried to death."

"How do you know the reindeer mean to go back and leave you here?" asked the Moon King suddenly. "Perhaps they are hiding among the mountains, and only want to tease you a little. They will probably come along later in the day and offer to take you back to Christmas Land."

Jack would not be comforted. "They have gone off, and we are left here with no means of getting away. Why did I say that horrid word to them? I could kick myself."

"Do stop worrying, Jack," the Moon King

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said. "We'll find some way of sending you back. Cheer up, old fellow. You look quite pale. I must ask Jip Joppa to bring you a tonic."

"A glass of water, please," Jack said. "I can't take anything else."

"Perhaps the children would like a glass of lemonade," said the Moon King, getting up and ringing the bell.

Jip Joppa appeared, and stood waiting for orders.

"A glass of cold water for Mr. Frost," said the Moon King, "lemonade for Betty and Roger, and for me—er——"

"The Diet Sheet, Your Majesty," cried Jip Joppa. "Your Majesty must not take anything without consulting it," and he fetched the silver-framed Diet Sheet from the sideboard and placed it in the Moon King's hands.

The Moon King looked somewhat sadly at his Diet Sheet, and said, "Ah, well, there seems to be nothing here but water or lemonade, so I suppose I had better take lemonade."

"Have you got a Diet Sheet, Mr. Frost?" Betty asked, turning to Jack.

"Dear me, no. His Majesty had to go to a

very clever doctor and pay a great deal of money for that Diet Sheet ; I am too poor to afford one."

" And you are the very man who ought to have one, my dear Frost," retorted the Moon King, " for you would always manage to lose it when you wanted to have a good meal and eat what you liked."

Jip Joppa returned with a silver tray and three glasses of lemonade.

" You have forgotten the water for Mr. Frost," the Moon King said severely.

Jip Joppa started, and turned pale. He set the tray of lemonade on the table, and turned to go. As he walked out of the room Betty caught a glimpse of his face. There was a strange, pained expression on it, as if he thought something terrible was going to happen.

He came back in a few minutes, bringing a brass scuttle full of coals. He set it down on the carpet beside Mr. Jack Frost. Next he went to the side-board and took a silver plate. Then he walked across to the fireplace for the silver tongs there. With them he placed a lump of coal on the silver plate and solemnly offered it to Jack.

Mr. Jack Frost took it, glancing quickly at his

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friend the Moon King, and said, "Er—thanks, Jip Joppa."

"Oh dear, oh dear!" the Moon King said sadly, "think of that happening to-day!"

Jip Joppa took no notice of anyone. He simply walked away with the coal-scuttle.

"What is the matter with Jip Joppa?" Roger cried. "Why has he given Mr. Frost a lump of coal?"

The Moon King walked cautiously to the door. When he had made sure it was fastened he stole back to his chair and said in a low voice to Roger and Betty, "Come here, both of you. I suppose I had better tell you all about it."



Chapter Seven

JIP JOPPA HAS HIS “STRANGE DAY”

“JIP JOPPA,” the Moon King began, speaking almost in a whisper, “is really one of the best servants in the world. Mr. Frost will agree with that, and he has known Jip Joppa for many years.”

“For nearly twenty years,” put in Jack, “and I think he is a splendid fellow.”

JIP JOPPA HAS HIS "STRANGE DAY"

"But the curious thing about Jip Joppa," went on the Moon King, "is that once every year he has what we call 'a strange day.' On that day he never seems to understand what is said to him ; he does everything quite wrong. I'm afraid he becomes a little bit crazy."

"It never lasts more than a day," Mr. Jack Frost said. "Jip Joppa will be quite all right to-morrow."

"Yes, most certainly he will," said the Moon King. "There will be nothing the matter with Jip Joppa to-morrow. But the point is, I want you please not to laugh at him to-day, whatever he may say or do ; and above all, be very careful not to give orders to him."

"We'll be very, very careful," promised Roger.

"And we won't laugh, whatever happens," said Betty.

"I am sorry it's come about just now, while you are staying with us," the Moon King said ; "but without any doubt this is going to be Jip Joppa's crazy day."

"It was so funny to see him give Mr. Frost a lump of coal on a plate," Roger remarked.

"He'll most likely do funnier things than that

before the day comes to an end," the Moon King said. "But don't forget, you must on no account laugh at him, or at least don't let him see that you are laughing at him."

"What kind of funny things does he generally do?" Roger asked.

"I can't tell you; they vary so much. But always, before his crazy day is over, Jip Joppa does one clever and wonderful deed. Last time, for instance, he went up into the attic and invented a razor with which a man can shave himself, and he'll never need to shave again as long as he lives!"

"I am sure Daddy would love Jip Joppa," remarked Roger. "He would want him to have crazy days very often."

"If Jip Joppa wants to do something clever and wonderful to-day I hope he will find an aeroplane, so that I can take the children back to Christmas Land," Mr. Jack Frost said, looking very gloomy again.

A grave silence followed Jack's words; but it was soon broken by Jip Joppa, who came noisily into the room, stamping in his heavy boots.

"Jip Joppa," the Moon King said gently, "I wish you would kindly put on your slippers."

JIP JOPPA HAS HIS "STRANGE DAY"

Without a word Jip Joppa rushed away. When he came back Betty and Roger stared at him in amazement. He had taken two of his master's black silk hats, cut holes in the crowns, and pushed his bare feet through. He had also taken the Rainbow Quilt and wrapped it round him. Dressed in this curious fashion, he shuffled across the room and bent down to poke the fire.

Roger and Betty could hardly manage to stifle their laughter. Betty pretended to sneeze, Roger cleared his throat, and both of them found it very difficult to keep serious faces. Betty coughed till she seemed to be choking. Roger, full of sympathy for her, had a fine idea. "I'll just turn a somersault and stand on my head," he whispered, "then you can clap your hands and laugh as much as you like, and Jip Joppa will think you are laughing at me."

So Roger shot over and paused for a second with his head and hands on the carpet and his feet in the air. "Bravo," cried Betty, laughing merrily. "Bravo, bravo!" echoed Mr. Jack Frost and the Moon King, joining in the laughter.

Jip Joppa came padding along in his black silk hats and flapping Rainbow Quilt to see what the

fun was all about. Everybody began to laugh afresh, and peal after peal of laughter rang through the room. No one laughed more heartily than Jip Joppa. He laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks, thinking all the time that they were laughing at Roger's somersault, not at his own quaint figure in the flip-flopping hats and the flapping Rainbow Quilt.

The laughter died away. Jip Joppa went across to the rocking-chair and sat near the door, with his legs crossed, one foot in its black silk hat gently swaying to and fro.

"We are having lots of fun here," Betty said, as she wiped the tears of mirth from her cheeks. "After all, I am glad the reindeer brought us. Do you come here often, Mr. Frost?"

"Rather. This place is called Come-when-you-like Castle."

"And it likes to live up to its name," added the Moon King. "I am always pleased to have company, especially during an eclipse, for it is so dull here then. Mr. Jack Frost is very kind, he usually flies over to see me when an eclipse is on, and we have some lively times. Jip Joppa is a fine dancer and he often dances for us."

JIP JOPPA HAS HIS "STRANGE DAY"

Jip Joppa, hearing these last words, solemnly rose from the rocking-chair, stepped into the middle of the room, and began to caper round and round in a merry jig. He kicked up his heels, and the black silk hats seemed to dance up and down in the air ; he whirled round and round about, and the ends of the Rainbow Quilt whirled with him.

" Oh, Roger," gasped Betty, with her hand on her mouth, choking back her laughter, " you had better turn a somersault quickly."

" Well done, Jip Joppa, that was a splendid dance," Mr. Jack Frost said.

Jip Joppa began to dance again. He danced round the table, he danced round the rocking-chair, and he danced to the door and out of the room, the Rainbow Quilt fluttering about him as he disappeared from sight.

He did not come back, so Mr. Frost and the Moon King sat down to a merry game of " Snap " with Roger and Betty till lunch-time. At the stroke of one the Moon King rang the bell and said, " I will ask Jip Joppa to give us some lunch, but no one must be disappointed if we don't get any. He may set the table for tea, or he may even——"

“Bring us lumps of coal,” finished Mr. Frost rather sadly.

But when Jip Joppa came in he not only set the table in an orderly fashion, he also produced a large plate of Mr. Jack Frost’s favourite ham-and-egg pies.

Jack’s face broke into smiles as he looked at them, but the Moon King said, “They’re not on my Diet Sheet. There seems to be nothing here to-day that’s on my Diet Sheet. It appears to me I’m going to starve.”

Betty felt very sorry for him. “I know what would be a good idea, Your Majesty,” she said. “Can’t you take a pencil and write ‘Ham-and-Egg Pies’ at the bottom of your Diet Sheet, just for to-day? If you write it in pencil you can rub it out to-morrow.”

The King shook his head sadly, and said no, he couldn’t do that.

They took their seats at the table and Jip Joppa came to Mr. Jack Frost’s side and handed the dish of ham-and-egg pies towards him.

“Splendid,” Jack said, lifting his fork to help himself. “Jip Joppa makes wonderful pies. It is worth while coming to Come-when-you-like

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Castle just to taste them. Only here does one eat such pies."

Jip Joppa stared at the pies, then at Jack, then at the pies again ; and before Jack had time even to take one on his fork, Jip Joppa had run with the dish to the window and hurled it with all its contents outside. There was a clatter of broken crockery and Jip Joppa, pressing his hands to his ears, hurried from the room.

"Dear me," said the Moon King, "I am so sorry."

"Well, that's that," Jack said sorrowfully. "We had better hurry up and eat the bread and cheese before Jip Joppa comes back."

When Jip Joppa returned he was no longer wearing the Rainbow Quilt, though the black silk hats still flip-flopped about his feet as he walked across the room. He brought with him a second dish of pies, which seemed to be even more delicious than the ones he had thrown through the window.

Jack gazed at the pies in delight, but Betty felt rather worried about the Rainbow Quilt. What had Jip Joppa done with it? "Mr. Frost," she whispered, "do you think we may ask Jip Joppa where the Rainbow Quilt is?"

Jip Joppa overheard. He stole to Betty's side and whispered to her mysteriously, "The Rainbow Quilt is quite well and happy. You need not worry about it."

Mr. Jack Frost was helping himself to one of the ham-and-egg pies, and when he had put it safely on his plate he said, with his most charming smile, "Thank you, Jip Joppa. It's awfully good of you to bring us a second dish."

Jip Joppa promptly threw the rest of the pies, dish and all, out of the window, and again rushed from the room.

"Why did you speak to him?" the Moon King said. "I'm afraid we shan't get any more pies."

"I'm sorry," Jack said, gazing at the one small pie on his plate.

"You had better cut it into three pieces, and share it between you," the Moon King said. "I'm sure it's the only pie you'll have."

So Jack carefully divided the pie, and he and Roger and Betty slowly munched at the very small portion each of them received.

Jip Joppa came in again, swiftly and unexpectedly. "Your Majesty," he cried to the Moon King, "is the clock on your Diet Sheet?"

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"Of course not, Jip Joppa."

"Very well, Your Majesty, I shall take it away," and lifting the large clock from the mantelshelf Jip Joppa solemnly marched off with it.

"Oh dear," sighed the Moon King, "I wish Jip Joppa would hurry up and do his wonderful deed, because he will then be all right again."

"Suppose, as his wonderful deed, Jip Joppa did something specially for you, Mr. Frost, what would you like it to be?" Roger asked.

"I should like him to make me a magic brush, so that I could paint the loveliest pictures I have ever painted," said Jack.

"And for you, Your Majesty?" continued Roger, turning to the Moon King.

"For me," said the Moon King, "let me think." He rubbed his nose thoughtfully and then said brightly, "Of course! I should like Jip Joppa to do something to the solar system, so that there would be no more eclipses."

"And for you, Betty?" said Roger, turning to his sister.

Betty hesitated, and at last replied in a quiet little voice, "I would like Jip Joppa to take me home to Mummy."

Roger slipped to her side and put his arm round her in a comforting fashion. "You mustn't be sad, Betty," he said. "We shan't stay here for ever. Of course, we shall go home some time."

Mr. Jack Frost and the Moon King had risen from the table, and now they were both smoking by the window. "Look at Mr. Frost," whispered Betty. "He is staring at the window-pane and thinking how he would love to paint a wonderful picture there."

"No, he isn't," said Roger. "He is looking down at the broken pies and wishing he had some more to eat."

"Wouldn't it be dreadful, Roger, if we really had to stay here for ever and ever?" Betty asked.

"Dreadful," agreed Roger. "I don't believe there's a single sweetshop anywhere."

"I wish Tweeny Bunting had come with us," sighed Betty, "I should like to play with him."

"And Mektoub, I wish he'd come," said Roger. "I should like another game of marbles with Mektoub. Last time we played I won fifty-four."

"I'm afraid poor Mektoub hasn't many marbles left," said Betty.

JIP JOPPA HAS HIS "STRANGE DAY"

"Of course he has. He is allowed to help himself from the sacks of marbles Father Christmas brings from Toy Land. I could win millions and millions . . ."

"You shouldn't ecksaggerate so, Roger," Betty reproved.

"Well, I might win one or two more," Roger said meekly.

Roger had hardly finished speaking when a loud rat-tat-tat was heard at the front door.

Who could it be? The Moon King and Mr. Jack Frost both looked startled.

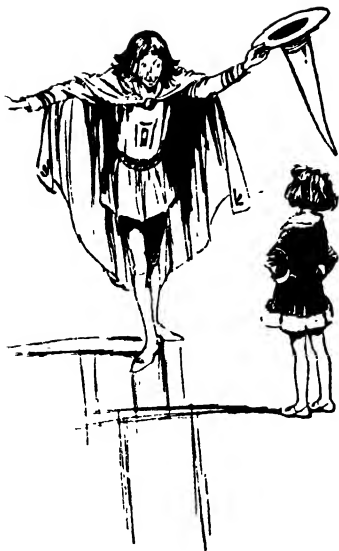
"Rat-tat-tat." This time the noise was louder than ever. Jip Joppa did not seem to be there to answer the knock, so the Moon King and Mr. Jack Frost marched into the hall, followed by Roger and Betty.

"Rat-tat-tat! RAT-TAT-TAT!" The sound was really deafening. The Moon King opened the door, and both he and Jack Frost stared with darkening faces at the man standing there.

Whipper Whopper, for it was he, burst into rude laughter.



The Moon King and Jack Frost stared at the man standing there.



Chapter Eight

HOW THE REINDEER WERE LOST AND FOUND AGAIN

“I THOUGHT this place was called Come-when-you-like Castle,” said Whipper Whopper in a loud, nasty voice. “But no one welcomes *me*. No one steps forward to shake hands with *me*.”

“We don’t know who you are,” Betty said.

“At your service, young lady,” he replied, with a mocking bow. “I am Whipper Whopper,

maker of ice and hoar-frost to His Majesty the Ice King."

"Oh, are you?" said Roger, stalking up to him, "then you are that horrid, wicked man Tweeny Bunting told us about——"

"There, there, Roger, that will do," the Moon King broke in.

Whipper Whopper burst into another loud laugh. "Don't stop him," he said. "I like listening to the little cock-sparrow! He is quite a fierce little chap, almost as fierce as Tweeny Bunting was yesterday. I think I will take him with me and keep him as my servant, as well as Tweeny Bunting——"

"What do you mean?" cried Mr. Jack Frost, his face growing pale. "Where is Tweeny Bunting——"

"Be quiet, Jack, and don't lose your temper," said the Moon King. "Perhaps this man Whipper Whopper will step inside and tell us why he has come."

"Very kind of you, Your Majesty, I'm sure," Whipper Whopper replied impudently. "I wondered when you were going to invite me inside"; and with his hat still thrust down on his head, his

hands deep in his pockets, Whipper Whopper walked across the hall, through the open door into the dining-room, and sat down in the rocking-chair.

Betty gazed at him, and saw a man with a very big nose and a heavy moustache. Just now there was a cruel leer on his face and Betty thought at once of the picture of the big, bad wolf in her "Little Red Riding-Hood" story-book at home.

"Perhaps," said Whipper Whopper, "Jip Joppa will kindly appear with one of his famous ham-and-egg pies?"

At this rude remark the Moon King stepped to Whipper Whopper's side, and Betty was amazed to see how stern and angry he looked. "Tell us at once why you have come here," he said sharply.

"Certainly, most noble and gracious king. I have come here to strike a bargain with my friend, my dear friend and beloved rival, Mr. Jack Frost."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Jack furiously.

"I mean this," said Whipper Whopper coolly. "I chanced to fly this way for a pleasant trip. I found your reindeer, and I have shut them up in a secret cave where you will never find them. Unless

I choose to set them free you will have to stay here for the rest of your life."

"And you will set them free at your own price, I suppose," said Jack. "What is it?"

"Really, my friend," said Whipper Whopper, "you are cleverer than I thought."

"What is your price?" said Jack angrily.

"If you tell me how you make your ice and hoar-frost, and if you promise that Tweeny Bunting shall live with me and be my servant, I will bring the reindeer to you," answered Whipper Whopper.

"Never!" cried Jack Frost.

Roger marched up to Whipper Whopper and stood erect before him.

"NEVER!" he said with flashing eyes.

"No, NEVER NEVER!" added Betty.

"Very well," replied Whipper Whopper. "That means Mr. Jack Frost must spend the rest of his days on the Moon, without even a paint-brush, and you children will never see your parents again."

At these words Betty bit her lips and forced back her tears, but she did not speak.

Jack turned piteously to the Moon King. "What am I to do?" he asked.

"You must decide, Jack," said the Moon King.

"I can't let Tweeny Bunting go," Jack said.

"Of course not," Roger said fiercely. "Tweeny Bunting mustn't go to live with this wicked man."

"Don't think of us, Mr. Frost," said Betty. "Think of Tweeny Bunting."

The Moon King turned to Whipper Whopper. "I think you had better go away for an hour," he said, "and leave Mr. Frost to think this matter over."

"I agree to that," retorted Whipper Whopper, "I do not find myself in very pleasant company. I will take a little stroll in your charming valleys, Your Majesty, and promptly at two o'clock I will come back and see what my good friend, Mr. Jack Frost, is going to do."

Whipper Whopper went out, banging the door loudly behind him.

"He is a *dreadful* man," cried Betty. "We couldn't think of letting Tweeny go to live with a man like that."

"But you and Roger won't want to stay here always, and never see your Mummy and Daddy again," replied Jack. "Oh, dear, what shall I

do ? ” and he sat down and buried his head in his hands.

“ This *is* a day ! ” said the Moon King, looking very worried. “ Now to make matters worse, Jip Joppa has gone off somewhere, and I have no idea where he is, nor what he is up to.”

“ And the Rainbow Quilt ? ” asked Roger. “ Has he taken that ? ”

“ I suppose so,” replied the Moon King.

Mr. Jack Frost got up, and began striding up and down the room, pulling at his hair, and saying, “ What am I to do ? I don’t care about myself, but I am thinking of these children, who will want to go home to their mother, and of Tweeny Bunting, who will pine away if I give him to that wretch, Whipper Whopper.”

“ We have told you not to think of us, Mr. Frost,” Betty said bravely. “ Think of Tweeny.”

“ Yes, think of Tweeny,” repeated Roger.

Jip Joppa burst through the doorway and danced into the room. He flung himself on the carpet at the Moon King’s feet and cried in the greatest glee, “ Master, master, you can’t think what I have done ! ”

“ Your wonderful deed, I have no doubt,”

smiled the Moon King. "What is it, Jip Joppa?"

"You will never guess, master," said Jip Joppa in growing triumph. "You will never guess!"

"Tell me, Jip Joppa, what is it?" the Moon King asked again.

"Master, how happy they will be!"

"Who, Jip Joppa?"

"These children, and this man who made me throw my pies out of the window."

In spite of all his grief and his curiosity Jack Frost could not help looking indignant at this last remark. "Upon my word!" he cried.

"Be quiet, Jack," warned the Moon King.

"But won't they all be happy now?" Jip Joppa cried, dancing wildly about the room.

"My dear Jip Joppa," said the Moon King, "do please tell us what you have done."

Jip Joppa drew himself up proudly, and his voice was full of importance. "I have found the reindeer," he said.

"Jip Joppa, are you quite sure?" his master asked earnestly. "Whipper Whopper has been here, and he told us he had locked them up in a secret cave."

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

“ Yes, so he did,” laughed Jip Joppa. “ Ah, ah ! But I know that cave very well, and I also know all about the secret underground passage which leads from it. The reindeer are waiting outside at this very moment. They are at the kitchen door.”



Mr. Jack Frost rushed out of the room. He came back again in a minute or two, his face radiant with joy. “ Roger, Betty, put on your things,” he cried. “ The reindeer have forgiven me for that horrid word I used. They say they will take us back to Christmas Land at once. They’re awfully sorry they can’t go down to the earth, but really, it isn’t allowed, except on Christmas Eve.”

“Hurrah!” cried Roger. “Long live Tweeny Bunting! Down with Whipper Whopper.”

“I shall be quite ready for Whipper Whopper when he comes back at two o’clock,” laughed the Moon King.

“Hurry up!” said Jack Frost, in a happy, excited voice. “We mustn’t keep the reindeer waiting. They are in a very good temper just now.”

Betty, just ready to jump in the sleigh, was bidding the Moon King good-bye. “Thank you very much, Your Royal Majesty, for all your kindness to us,” she said.

Roger made a sweeping bow. “Thank you, Your Holy Highness,” he said, and looked in triumph at Betty, to see what she thought of this grand title.

“I have been awfully charmed to have you,” smiled the Moon King, “and come again whenever you like.”

“I should be glad if we could have the Rainbow Quilt, please,” Roger said, very politely, to Jip Joppa. Jip Joppa brought the Rainbow Quilt, and at the same time he handed a neatly packed cardboard box to Mr. Jack Frost. “Ham-and-egg pies, sir,” he said.

“ Thank you, Jip Joppa,” Jack said gratefully. “ You are a capital fellow. I shall paint a picture of you on my very next window.”

“ Are you all safely seated ? ” called one of the reindeer. “ We are ready to start.”

“ Yes, we’re all in the sleigh. You can be off now,” shouted Jack in reply.

The reindeer plunged forward, rose high in the air, and started on their race back to Christmas Land. When the sleigh had vanished out of sight Jip Joppa sat down on the front verandah and slowly drew the black silk hats from his feet. He looked at them in great surprise, as though he had no idea where they had come from ; then he turned to his master and said, “ I am all right now, Your Majesty.”

“ Of course you are, Jip Joppa,” smiled the Moon King. “ Come inside, and we will wait for Whipper Whopper. He will probably be here in a short time.”

The Moon King seated himself in his most comfortable chair and took up his copy of “ The Moon Times.” By and by he glanced up from its pages, to see Whipper Whopper’s impudent face pressed against the window-pane. The next minute

THE REINDEER LOST AND FOUND AGAIN

Whipper Whopper was thumping on the front door.

"It is now two o'clock," Whipper Whopper said. "I have called to see what my good friend, Mr. Jack Frost——"



He had no time to speak further. The Moon King broke in fiercely, "Mr. Frost has found the reindeer, thank you. He is now on the way home to Christmas Land. If ever you come to my house again I will——"

There was a look on the Moon King's face which

made Whipper Whopper turn round very quickly. But the Moon King's boot was too quick for him, and with a howl of rage Whipper Whopper fell sprawling over the door-step.

"Give him one more kick, master," urged Jip Joppa.

The Moon King shook his head. "No, that's enough," he said. "Remember, it's Christmas-time."

.

The children found their journey back to Christmas Land quite pleasant and peaceful. The reindeer were in a good temper all the way and they galloped on and on, as fast as they could go.

"Mother Christmas will be so surprised to see us back," said Roger to Betty.

"She'll be very pleased, I know," said Betty.

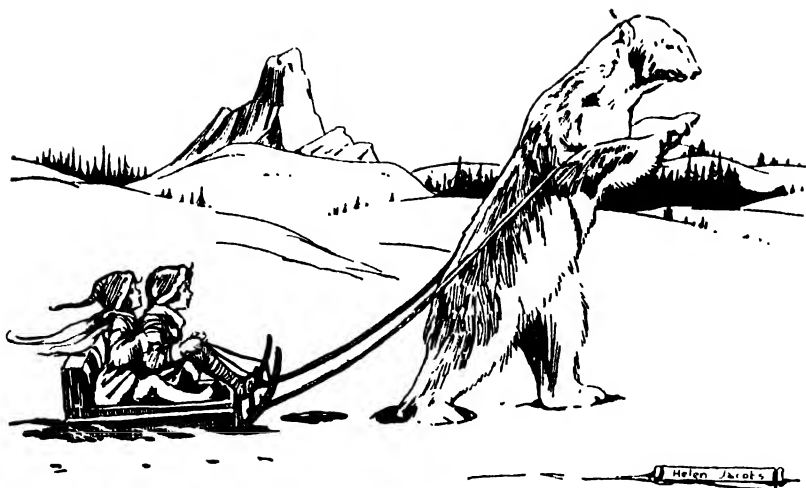
"And I shall win some more marbles," Roger said, diving his hands deep down into his pockets to make sure that those he already had were quite safe.

Betty leaned forward to speak to Mr. Jack Frost on the front seat. "You know, Mr. Frost," she called to him, "there is just one thing I keep won-

dering about. We didn't see the Moon King's daughter."

"I know," Jack called back. "You see, she had just gone away again."

Soon they reached the courtyard at the back of Father Christmas's house. The reindeer glided gracefully to the ground, setting all their bells a-jingling as they did so. Mektoub and Mother Christmas rushed out of the house. "I am not at all surprised to see you," Mother Christmas said. "Come in and have some tea."



Chapter Nine

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

THE children's year in Christmas Land passed quickly. Almost every afternoon Mektoub drew them in a little sledge over the snow-fields and taught them how to make snow houses filled with little snow families. In the evenings he and Roger often played at marbles.

Mr. Jack Frost and Tweeny Bunting spent all their spare time at Father Christmas's house, and Jack wrote dozens of new songs and stories. He loved to sit in the twilight and tell Betty some new

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

tale ; but often, in the midst of it, he would jump up and say to Tweeny, " My brushes, please, and my palette ! I must run off and paint a picture."

But now the year was over. Christmas Eve had come round once again, and to-night the children were going home.

Mother Christmas was moving about in the dining-room, packing a few last toys. Mektoub was dusting a pile of coloured balls, with such agitation that one after another they rolled to the ground. Roger stooped to pick them up, and silently tossed them into the basket.

Mother Christmas wrapped soft tissue-paper round a golden-haired doll and said, with a sorrowful shake of her head, " Who will help me to name the dolls when Betty has gone away ? "

" And who will play marbles with me when Roger has left us ? " asked Mektoub.

" But I know a father and mother upon the earth who will be very happy to-night," smiled Mother Christmas.

Mektoub had finished his task. He went to the cupboard and produced a small parcel, wrapped in brown paper. " Here is a present for you, Roger," he said, " in memory of me."

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

"May I open it now?" asked Roger.

Mektoub nodded.

Roger pulled off the paper wrapping, opened a small box, and found inside a pocket-knife,



with two blades and a corkscrew. He was tremendously pleased and proud. "Thanks awfully, Mektoub," he said. "A boy isn't much good without a knife. I've always wanted to have one."

"And here is a present for Betty," said Mektoub, handing a packet to Betty. "It is a little

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

work-box," he added, "and Mr. Jack Frost has kindly painted a picture on it."

Betty was charmed with the box, and she admired Mr. Frost's picture immensely. She thought it was even prettier than his window-pane pictures.

She ran to put it safely away, and for a few minutes she and Roger were whispering together before an open drawer, and gloating over the contents. For they had been busy making little presents for all their friends, and were going to bestow them as parting gifts last thing that evening.

"Do you think Mr. Frost will wear the silk necktie I have knitted for him, Roger?" Betty asked anxiously.

"No, I think he will lose it," replied Roger.

Betty looked troubled for a minute, then her brow cleared. "I will ask Tweeny Bunting to take care of it for him," she said.

"I am sure Mektoub will be pleased with the present I've made for him," said Roger, fondly pressing a long packet marked "For Mektoub."

"Of course, you mustn't tell him what it is."

"I don't know," returned Betty. "You've never told me."

"I thought I saw you taking a peep at it one day," said Roger.

"I didn't," retorted Betty, with spirit. "I don't want to peep at your silly old presents."

"Hallo, everybody! Hallo, Roger and Betty. At the secret drawer again? I think I must come and see what is in that drawer!"

Roger and Betty hurriedly closed the drawer and turned to greet Mr. Jack Frost and Tweeny Bunting. "Oh no, Mr. Frost, you mustn't touch the drawer. You really mustn't," Betty said anxiously.

Jack laughed, and lifted Betty in his strong arms. "We have planned a delightful entertainment for your last night," he said. "I hope you will enjoy it. We have invited some distinguished guests, and two of them are great friends of yours."

"Who are they?" asked Betty.

"The King of the Moon and Jip Joppa," replied Jack.

"Hurrah!" said Roger. "I hope Jip Joppa will put on the black silk hats and dance for us."

"We are to have other royal guests," went on Jack Frost. "The Ice King and Ice Queen are coming."

"And what about Whipper Whopper?"

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

laughed Mother Christmas. "Haven't you invited your dear friend Whipper Whopper?"

Jack set Betty down and said, with an angry stamp of his foot, "Whipper Whopper! I hope we have seen the last of him. I trust I shall never set eyes upon his ugly face again."

The very mention of Whipper Whopper's name was quite enough to upset Jack Frost. He marched up and down the room, pulling at his hair and saying, "Gr-gr! Whipper Whopper, indeed! Let him dare to show himself here."

Presently Mother Christmas, Mektoub, Tweeny Bunting and Roger all marched out of the room laden with toys. Betty was left alone with Jack.

"Please stop thinking about Whipper Whopper, Mr. Frost," she said, going up to her friend and sitting beside him on the sofa. "Tell me about your pictures. Did you go to the earth painting last night?"

"I did," said Jack Frost. "Tweeny Bunting mixed some of my best hoar-frost and I painted thousands of pictures. Mine is a wonderful life, Betty. I wouldn't change it for anything. Just imagine, I steal down to earth with a paint-brush

in my hand and leave beauty on every window-pane."

"I wonder——" began Betty slowly. "Mr. Frost, did you pass by our house in Ladbroke Square?"

"I did, Betty," said Jack soberly, guessing her thoughts.

"Did you see Mummy?"

"Yes."

"What was she doing?"

"She was crying."

"Crying?" Betty's voice faltered. "Why was she crying?"

"I heard your father talking to her," said Jack. "He asked her what she would like to have for a Christmas present this year, and she said, 'I only want the children back.'"

Betty was clasping one of Jack's strong hands tightly in hers. She gazed anxiously into his face. "Mr. Frost, are you quite, quite sure that Mummy was crying?"

"I saw tiny drops of water stealing from her eyes," Jack answered solemnly. "They were as bright as the sparkles of frost Tweeny Bunting uses when he mixes my paints. She wiped them away

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

with her handkerchief. Then she hid her face on your father's chest and I couldn't see it any more. But her shoulders shook up and down and she made a funny, gurgling sound in her throat. That, I believe, is how the Earth-ladies cry."

"It was such a pity," Betty said sadly, "that you couldn't talk to her and tell her we were coming back to-night."

"I couldn't, you know," said Jack. "I can't talk to people on the earth. I can only sing to the breezes."

Betty sighed. "Poor Mummy! I wish we could go home now. It seems a long time to wait till to-night."

Jack smiled, a smile of happy triumph. "I had a wonderful idea, Betty," he began.

"Yes? What was it? What did you do, Mr. Frost?"

"Your mother's tears made me feel very sad, Betty. I wanted to comfort her, but yet I could not speak to her. Suddenly I thought of a way. I made up a little song that goes to a tune the Earth-people sing on Christmas Eve, and I taught it to the breezes. I asked them to fly about near your window all night long, and never stop sing-

ing my song. Then your mother would hear, and know you were coming home."

"And did the breezes promise?" asked Betty.

"They did. I am sure they were singing my song all the night through."

Betty's face was radiant. "I think you are a genius, Mr. Frost," she announced. "Do you know what a genius is?"

"I don't, but it sounds like something rather nice."

"My Daddy is a genius," Betty said proudly, "and it means a man who has wonderful thoughts. Geniuses are very clever, but they need a lot of looking after, Mummy says."

"Then I am sure Tweeny Bunting would agree that I am a genius," Jack declared.

"Please sing me the song you made for the breezes," Betty said. "I would like to hear it."

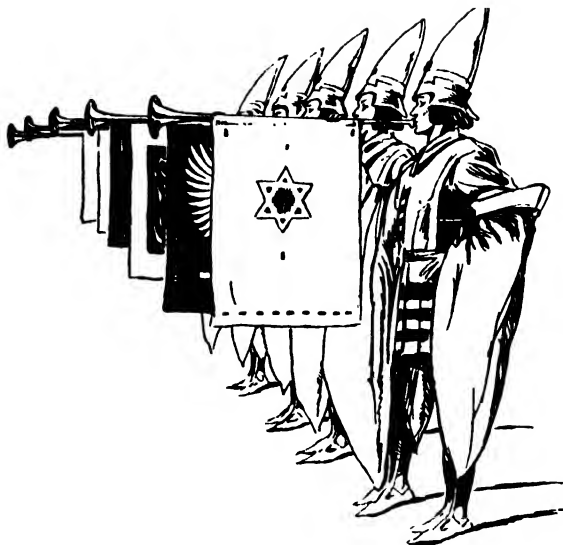
So Jack sang, to the old familiar tune of "While Shepherds watch," the following verse :

On Christmas Eve the angels sing
A song of peace on earth,
And all the bells of Christmas ring
A peal of love and mirth.

JACK'S SONG FOR THE BREEZES

Then little children far away
Will run to mother's knee,
And she will fold them in her arms
Beside the Christmas Tree.

Betty clapped her hands in delight. “Now I am quite sure Mummy knows we are coming home,” she said.



Chapter Ten

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

“ALL I can say is,” announced Father Christmas, rubbing his hands in great satisfaction, “I believe this is going to be the best show Mr. Jack Frost has ever given to us. By the very special favour of their Majesties the Ice Queen and the Ice King he has been able to engage the services of the Ice Maidens who will give us a marvellous exhibition of their winter dance.”

“My dear,” said Mother Christmas, “why don’t you use words the children can understand? Father Christmas means,” turning to Roger and Betty, “that the Ice Maidens are coming to dance for us.”

“They are here now, in fact,” said Father Christmas, “waiting for the show to begin as soon as the Ice King and Queen arrive.”

“They are coming,” said Roger. “Listen to that noise.”

And indeed the blare of trumpets in the courtyard was almost deafening. Father Christmas rushed out to welcome his royal visitors, and soon the Ice King and the Ice Queen, with a number of their attendants, entered the house. The Ice Queen spread out her snowy robes, and looked very grand in her glistening crown that must, Betty thought, be made of ice. But when it showed no signs of melting she decided it might be glass.

The Moon King and Jip Joppa were the next to arrive and Tweeny Bunting proudly ushered them to their seats.

Mr. Jack Frost, full of importance, was ready to begin his show.



The Ice Queen.

“Just run round and light up all the candles, Tweeny,” he said.

Tweeny took a long taper and flitted about the room, lighting the many-coloured candles. His arms swayed, his wings fluttered, and were now green, now golden, in the candlelight. Roger and Betty watched all his movements with the greatest admiration.

“Doesn’t the Moon King look grand in his crimson robes?” Betty whispered to Roger.

“Too fat, I think,” Roger whispered back. “He must have lost his Diet Sheet.”

Betty, shocked, cried, “Sh!”

“Isn’t it a shame that Jip Joppa hasn’t put on his black silk hats?” Roger whispered again.

“Ahem!” cried Jack Frost. “Now I believe we are all quite ready——”

“Just a moment,” cried Mektoub, springing up from his chair. “I have forgotten my new spectacles.”

He trotted out of the room and came back adorned with a pair of huge horn-rimmed spectacles.

“Now may we begin?” said Jack, when Mektoub had taken his seat again. “Tweeny

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

Bunting, please keep your wings still ! The least flutter disturbs me." Here Jack paused, and dived anxiously into first one pocket and then another. " Oh dear," he said dismally, " I fear I have lost it."

" What have you lost, my dear fellow ? " the Moon King asked kindly.

" The score of my song," Jack answered blankly.

" It is there on the piano in front of you."

Jack was greatly relieved. He raised his hand and Father Christmas opened the door. Twelve Ice Maidens glided in, clad in shining white robes that seemed to be covered with snow crystals. On their hair they wore wreaths of glittering icicles. They began to sing, with tripping and swaying movements,

Eena, meena, feena, fo,
Skipping, dancing to and fro,
Swaying, swinging high and low.

Bells are ringing,
Tree-tops swinging,
Breezes singing,

Trip it lightly to and fro,
Eena, meena, feena, fo.



*To a forest in the sea,
Trip it, trip it, dance with me.*

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

The tallest of the Ice Maidens floated to the centre and sang in a clear, lovely voice, like the voice of a lark soaring in an April sky :

Trip it, trip it,
Dance with me,
To a forest in the sea,
I will show you azure waves,
Sea-pearl depths and hollow caves,
Where the music of the deep
Lulls the winter maids to sleep.
All night long on coral beds
Softly rest our weary heads,
In a magic haunt below,
Far from ice and far from snow,
To a forest in the sea,
Trip it, trip it, dance with me.

The group of Ice Maidens round her took up the chorus again, with the sweetest of voices and the lightest of dances :

Eena, meena, feena, fo,
Skipping, dancing high and low,
Swaying, swinging to and fro.

Bells are ringing,
Tree-tops swinging,
Breezes singing, ♪

Trip it lightly to and fro,
Eena, meena, feena, fo.

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

Next, circling about the tallest Ice Maiden, they danced their winter dance so beautifully that Betty wished Mummy and Daddy were there to watch those tripping feet and flying forms. Last of all, before they marched off the stage, the Ice Maidens sang their prettiest song :

In the morning swift we rise,
Rise to greet the dawn-red skies.
Where we fly the waters freeze,
Hoar-frost gathers on the trees.

Over all the land we go,
Flinging crystal on the snow,
Hanging sparkles on the leaves,
Silver fringes from the eaves.
And wherever we have been,
Earth is decked with pearl and sheen.

Mr. Jack Frost, who had made up the dances, songs and music came in for great applause.

“Excellent, my dear Mr. Frost,” the Ice King said. “I promised Whipper Whopper a knight-hood if he could make ice and hoar-frost like yours. If he can give me such music as well I’ll make him Prime Minister.”

“Do not make rash promises,” said the Ice Queen to her husband. “I had a talk with

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

Whipper Whopper this morning and he informed me that he would be able to make ice exactly like Mr. Frost's this very evening. If he should succeed who knows what he may do next ? ”

Jack Frost smiled, a proud, disdainful smile. But at the Ice Queen's words Tweeny Bunting looked very disturbed.

He slipped from his seat and stole round to Mektoub's side. For a moment he and the Polar Bear were whispering together. No one noticed when they crept quietly from the room.

“ With Your Majesties' approval,” said Jack, “ we will now continue our programme. Our next item is a song.”

The Moon King sat down at the piano to play the accompaniment, and Jack began to sing, sentimentally :

When nights are long and winds are cold
She climbs upon my knee,
And while I weave her fairy-tales
The world is sweet to me.

I read my simple lays to her,
And ever in her eyes
Some inward joy comes leaping up
To take me by surprise.

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

I'm just a man who paints and sings,
Without a cent to spend,
But all this year in Christmas Land,
A child has been my friend.

“Does the child mean me, Mr. Frost?” asked Betty.

“Yes,” replied Jack, bowing.

“I guessed you meant me,” smiled Betty. “But is it true that you have no money to spend? I wish I had my money-box here. I could give you some, I am very rich. I have nearly fifteen shillings of my very own.”

Jack Frost threw back his head proudly and said with a grand air, “I only put that into my song. What do I care about money when all the windows of the world are mine to paint pictures upon?”

“I wish you had put Roger into the song,” Betty said.

“The next song is about Roger,” Jack said.
“Listen.”

Roger and Mektoub,
Caper and sing,
Nonny ay nonny,
Round in a ring.
Who so merry, who so gay?
Roger and Mektoub singing away.

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

Roger plays marbles,
Wins half a score,
Mektoub laughs gaily,
Loses ten more.

Who so wealthy, who so poor ?

Roger and Mektoub down on the floor.

“That’s a jolly song,” Roger said approvingly.
“But why do you say Mektoub loses only half a score ? I win forty and fifty at a time.”

“I must alter it some day,” Jack said hastily.
“Now we are going to have a song which I am sure you will all . . .”

Jack’s speech was interrupted by the sounds of squealing and of scuffling feet in the hall. Everybody started up in amazement. Mektoub came staggering into the room with Whipper Whopper, bound with cords and string, in his arms.

Tweeny Bunting followed, carrying Mektoub’s large, horn-rimmed spectacles.

Mektoub, panting, out of breath, advanced to the middle of the room and with a gesture of the greatest contempt threw Whipper Whopper upon the floor.

The Ice King rose from his seat. “What does this mean ?” he cried.

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Tweeny Bunting stepped forward and made a low bow. "It means, Your Majesty," he cried, "that I found Whipper Whopper in my master's



room, searching the desk where my master keeps his private papers. I will show you what he has in his pocket."

Tweeny Bunting knelt down and dramatically pulled a tiny notebook from Whipper Whopper's coat pocket.

"My notebook!" cried Jack Frost. "The

book in which I have written my recipe for making ice and hoar-frost."

"Yes, it is your notebook," Tweeny Bunting said, "but I can't understand how Whipper Whopper got it out of the secret cupboard. As soon as you gave me back the key I put it on the ribbon round my neck and it is still here." Tweeny Bunting pulled open his tunic and showed the little silver key safely tied on the piece of ribbon.

"I'm afraid," faltered Jack, "I forgot to put the notebook back in the safe. I suppose I brought it here with my songs and papers and left it on the desk in my bedroom."

The Moon King looked down at Whipper Whopper and cried indignantly, "The rascal! The Villain! The caterpultering Villain!"

"Whipper Whopper must be punished," the Ice King said sternly, "and I will ask all of you, my friends, to declare what his punishment shall be."

Mr. Jack Frost pointed an angry finger at Whipper Whopper, and chanted in a very fierce voice :

No more hoar-frost shall he make.
All his ice-tools we will break.

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Roger chimed in :

At marbles he shall never play,
His pocket-knife we'll take away.

Betty took up the song :

On winter nights when tales are told
We'll leave him outside in the cold.

The Moon King moved forward and sang threateningly :

If he should chance to visit me,
Ten thousand stars I'll make him see.

Jip Joppa followed at his master's heels and expressed his feelings in a deep bass voice :

I'd like to give him just one kick,
To pay him for this knavish trick.

Tweeny Bunting came forward and fluttered round the prostrate Whipper Whopper. He shook his pretty wings and sang in a soft little voice :

Uncord him now and set him free,
He shall not spoil our Christmas glee.

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

At these words everybody pointed at Whipper Whopper and sang gaily :

Uncord him now and set him free,
He shall not spoil our Christmas glee.

Mektoub and Tweeny Bunting went down on their knees and deftly unfastened Whipper Whopper's cords. Father Christmas opened wide the door. Whipper Whopper skulked away, and no one in Christmas Land ever saw him again.

Mr. Jack Frost, quite happy once more, turned to the company. He laid his notebook carelessly on a chair beside him, but Tweeny Bunting quietly picked it up and put it away in a safe place.

"Now my friends," Mr. Jack Frost began, coughing, and sweeping back his hair, "we are going to have the real Christmas song, the song of the evening, I might say. I want everybody, please, to join in the chorus after I have sung it once. It is very easy. You will soon pick it up."

He took his place at the piano and began in the gayest of tunes :

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When the night goes grey and the stars are gold,
And bells for Christmas ring,
When children close by the yule-tide log
Their Christmas carols sing,
In his sleigh he jumps, to the deer he calls,
Away to earth he flies,
Skeltering along by the Milky Way,
And down the silver skies.

Chorus :

'Tis our good old friend in his crimson gown,
With his beard so white and long;
So we'll give a cheer and a loud hurrah
In a rousing Christmas song.

He has filled the sleigh with his finest toys
For little ones on earth.
There are smiles in his eyes as he drives along
And his cheeks are round with mirth.
He has presents packed for the grown-up folks,
And boughs of mistletoe;
And the reindeer rush with their jingling bells,
Ring-ting, ring-tang, ring-O !

Chorus (in which everybody joined heartily) :

'Tis our good old friend in his crimson gown,
With his beard so white and long;
So we'll give a cheer and a loud hurrah
In a rousing Christmas song.

WHIPPER WHOPPER COMES AGAIN

He will tie his deer to a chimney-pot
And softly he will creep,
To the small white beds where the children lie
Half-smiling in their sleep.
For the children know that on Christmas Eve
Their friend is on his way
And they dream all night of a red-gowned man
In a jingling-tingling sleigh.

Chorus (Here Jack rose from his chair, beating time with such enthusiasm that quite without meaning to do so he banged his stick on Tweeny Bunting's head. But Tweeny only laughed, and they all did their best for the last time.):

'Tis our good friend here in his crimson gown,
With his beard so white and long;
So we'll give a cheer and a loud hurrah
In a rousing Christmas song.

Father Christmas was deeply moved. He rose and bowed to the company and stammered, "Thank you, thank you very much. But I don't deserve such a splendid song. I really don't deserve it at all."

"You deserve a much better one," Jack returned gallantly. "You are the children's Christmas hero."

"No, no. You are making a great mistake," said Father Christmas. "The song should have

been about my wife. I can do nothing without her. It is she who makes everybody happy at Christmas-time."

"I wanted to write a song about her," Jack said frankly. "But she wouldn't hear of it. She said we should have far too much singing, and the shorter the programme the better."

"Now, now, Jack," laughed Mother Christmas, "who is telling tales out of school? And listen! The reindeer are calling. Roger and Betty must get ready at once."

"Bother those reindeer!" Jack said ungraciously. "They are always calling just when everybody has forgotten about them."

Roger was struggling into the scarlet coat which Mektoub held for him. "Where is the Rainbow Quilt, please?" he asked. "We mustn't forget the Rainbow Quilt."

"Of course not. What would Carline say?" chimed in Betty.

"And I hope, Betty, you haven't forgotten the carrot for Neddy Donkey," said Roger severely.

"You said you would take one home for him."

"The reindeer have promised to go very quickly," Father Christmas remarked, fastening

his long gown. "We shall soon be at Ladbroke Square."

Mother Christmas stepped across to the window and drew back the thick curtains. The sky was strewn with stars and brilliant moonlight fell upon the fields of snow stretching for miles in the distance. Mother Christmas seemed to be gazing far away, and only Tweeny Bunting noticed that her handkerchief was dabbed quickly to her eyes and then put away again.

"We have planned how we are going to surprise Mummy and Daddy," laughed Betty. "Father Christmas will set us down on the balcony just in front of the dining-room window, which opens like a door. We shall push it open very softly, and then we shall run in and say, MERRY CHRISTMAS!"

Mektoub, looking very worried, came in from the courtyard. He shook his white paws in despair and said severely to Father Christmas, "The reindeer have just told me they won't wait another minute. They want you to hurry up and start at once."

Poor Father Christmas picked up his long gown at both sides and simply rushed from the room.

“Come along, Roger! Come along, Betty! Hurry up!” he shouted.

The children cried good-bye to their friends and ran behind Father Christmas as fast as they could.

Mektoub pushed up the dining-room window, and he and Mother Christmas, with Mr. Jack Frost, Tweeny Bunting, The Moon King, Jip Joppa and the Ice King and Queen, all leaned out and waved their handkerchiefs as the reindeer rose in the air.

Roger and Betty waved back, and the little party at the window chanted, till their voices were quite hoarse :

“Good-bye, good-bye!

Merry Christmas!

GOOD-BYE! GOOD-BYE!

MERRY CHRISTMAS”

The reindeer snorted, as if to say, “What is all this fuss about?” and plunged on in the moonlight.



Chapter Eleven

THE RAINBOW QUILT GOES HOME

IN a corner of the dining-room at 24, Ladbroke Square, W.11, a tall Christmas tree stood in a gaily painted tub. Daddy was tying coloured balls on its twigs, and Mummy stood back to admire the effect.

“Do you think I have tied on enough glass balls?” Daddy asked.



Daddy was tying coloured balls on the twigs.

“Put on a few more,” answered Mummy.
“The children like them so much.”

Daddy obediently went on fastening the glass balls to the swaying twigs. When he had put on about a dozen more he turned to the little table at his side and held up a brown-paper packet. “One of your Christmas presents, my dear,” he said, handing it to Mummy.

Mummy unwrapped the parcel, took out a prettily bound book, and read out the title, “THE LAND WHERE CHILDREN PLAY,” by W. Forbes Warrington. “My dear,” she exclaimed, “I am delighted. I didn’t know the book was out. Now I shall be able to read the tales to the children.”

“You seem very sure that Roger and Betty are coming home to-night,” remarked Daddy.

“Of course I am sure. Didn’t I tell you that I heard the song all night long?”

“But did you really hear voices?” asked Daddy.

“Yes, gentle, soft voices that sounded like the murmuring of the breeze, and yet the words were most distinct.”

“I think, darling,” said Daddy, “you were dreaming.”

"I was not," cried Mummy indignantly. "Carline heard the song, too. Ask her about it."

"Yes, I will," said Daddy. "I want to give her one of the books."

He rang the bell at the fireside and Carline came in.

"Carline," said Daddy, "here is one of your Christmas presents."

"Well, well, sir," smiled Carline, "another new book? I'm sure I don't know how you think of them all. I *am* pleased. Is that tale about the ogre in this one?"

"It is the last story in the book, I believe."

"Now I shall be able to read it," said Carline, "I never did hear the finish of that ogre."

She opened the book and turned its pages with loving pride, stroking the black print with her wrinkled fingers almost reverently. "I *am* pleased," she said again. "Whatever will the children say?"

"Ah—yes, Carline," began Daddy, "what is this story about your hearing a song in the night?"

"You may believe me or you may disbelieve

me, sir," said Carline mysteriously, "but I heard a song plain enough."

"Can you remember the words?" asked Daddy.

"Well, bits of them," Carline said. "They went to the tune of 'While Shepherds Watch,' and at first I thought it was only the waits singing down in the street. I wished they would stop, for what with having had my pains again, and extra jobs for Christmas, I was tired. I said to myself, 'I wish to goodness they'd stop their caroling and let me get off to sleep.' Then all at once I was listening to the words, and they weren't 'While Shepherds' at all. They were about the children coming home."

"Yes?" said Daddy, puffing thoughtfully at his cigar.

"Then I sat up in bed and listened," went on Carline, "and it flashed across my mind, 'Why, of course, it means our children, Betty and Roger, are coming home.'"

"But did you hear voices?" urged Daddy.

"It's hard to say," Carline said, shaking her head. "The singing was soft and low, like little winds going through the trees. I think there were voices—but not ordinary voices."

“Are you quite sure it was not a dream, Carline?” said Daddy.

Carline drew herself up with great dignity. “As soon as I had had my breakfast this morning,” she said, “I set to work and made a Christmas Cake with ROGER and BETTY on it in pink icing. Then I aired the beds. Should I do all that for just a dream?”

“I am glad you aired the beds, Carline,” said Mummy.

“I haven’t put a new quilt on Roger’s bed,” Carline replied. “I have no doubt they’ll bring the Rainbow Quilt home, seeing the store they set by it.”

“Anything in the song about the Rainbow Quilt, Carline?” laughed Daddy, as he stooped to pick up a toy which had fallen from a twig of the Christmas tree.

“No,” said Carline, “there was nothing about the Rainbow Quilt. All the same, if that quilt doesn’t turn up with the children to-night I shall be very much surprised.”

Daddy was busy tying the fallen toy on to the tree again. “I think,” he mumbled, the string between his lips, “you ought to sing that song to me. Can you remember it, Mummy?”

THE RAINBOW QUILT GOES HOME

"I can," she answered. "I have been singing it to myself all day."

"And I daresay I could join in," Carline added, "though I'm no singer, as you know. My sister says I can't sing the Doxology without wandering into 'Rule Britannia.'"

"Never mind the tune, Carline, I am anxious to hear the words," Daddy said.

So Mummy began to sing in her pretty contralto voice, and Carline joined in, with a word here and there and as much tune as she could get :

On Christmas Eve the angels sing
A song of peace on earth
And all the bells of Christmas ring
A peal of love and mirth.
Then little children far away
Will run to mother's knee,
And she will fold them in her arms
Beside the Christmas Tree.

From the window came the slightest sound of the turning of a catch. . . . The long dark curtains rustled, as if stirred by a sudden breeze.

"The window is not properly closed, Carline," began Daddy. .

Before Carline had time to move a step the curtains were thrust apart, the glass doors were

THE LAND OF NEVER-GROW-OLD

flung wide open. Roger and Betty rushed into the room.

"Merry Christmas, Mummy," cried Betty as she flung herself into her mother's arms.

"Merry Christmas, everybody," cried Roger, and tossing the Rainbow Quilt to Carline he sprang to Daddy's side.

"I knew this Rainbow Quilt would come home again," Carline said in a tone of triumph, and not thinking what she was doing she actually caught up one end and wiped away a tear on a lovely purple patch of shining silk.



2 Christ the Child is born to-day

Words by
STELLA MEAD

(CHRISTMAS CAROL)

Music by
WALTER L. TWINNING

Con moto

1. Christ the Child..... is born to - day,..... Gent - ly nest - ling on the
hay, Ox and ass in mild sur - prise Gaze on Him with
friend - ly eyes. Lit - tle child - ren..... leave your play,..... Turn to
leave..... your play,
Beth - le - hem to - day;..... Ga - ther round..... the stall and
Sweet - est
sing..... Sweet - est
sing Sweet - est praise..... to Christ..... the..... King.
sing..... Sweet - est

p *cresc.* *p* *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.* *mf* *cresc.* *rall.* *rall.*

mf

2. Wise Men jour - neyed from a - far,..... Guid-ed by the heavn-ly

mf

star..... Shepherds heard the an - gels sing, Wan-dered forth to

p

seek the King. Lit - tle child - ren... leave your play,..... Turn to
leave..... your play,

p

mf

Beth - le - hem to - day;..... Christ who is..... the child - ren's

mf

He is

friend..... He is

friend, He is there..... at jour - ney's end.

friend..... He is

rall.

rall.

Santa Claus

Words by
STELLA MEAD

Music by
JACK ENGLAND

VOICE *With spirit* *mf*

PIANO

When the

night goes grey, and the stars are gold and bells for Christmas ring, When the

children close by the Yule-tide log, their Christmas ca - rols sing In his

sleigh he jumps, to the deer he calls, a - way to earth he flies, Skelter-

f CHORUS

-ing a - long by the Milk-y Way, and down the sil - ver skier. 'Tis our

cresc.

good old friend, In his crimson gown, With his beard so white and long, So we'll

DC.

give a cheer, and a loud hur-rah, In a rous - ing Christmas song.

He has filled the sleigh with his finest toys
For little ones on earth.

There are smiles in his eyes as he drives along
And his cheeks are round with mirth.

He has presents packed for the grown-up folk
And boughs of mistletoe.

And the reindeer rush with their jingling bells—
Ring-ting, ring-tang, ring-O!

He will tie his deer to a chimney-pot,
And softly he will creep

To the small white beds where the children lie
Half-smiling in their sleep.

For the children know that on Christmas Eve
Their friend is on his way,

And they dream all night of a red-gowned man
In a jingling-tingling sleigh.

Chorus 'Tis our good etc.

Chorus 'Tis our good etc.

